SUNDAY BIZ /B6

2 ladies lovingly craft pastillas wrappers that are just thrown away

SUNDAY MAGAZINE

A Filipina heads the Manila bureau of Al Jazeera English channel, the network known for exclusive audio visuals of Osama bin Laden

LIFESTYLE /C1

Check out the wish lists of poor Pinoy kids and play Santa to them so they'll feel it's Christmas

ENTERTAINMENT /K1

Golden Globe bets topped by double nominees Clint Eastwood for Best Director, Leonardo DiCaprio for Best Actor , Helen Mirren for Best Actress

She thought 'Premyo Sa Resibo' P1-M prize a hoax

By Joel Tan
Cebu Bureau

MIRELA DOLOR HAS NEVER WON A RAFFLE. So it was a great leap of faith for her to send a text entry to the Bureau of Internal Revenue and Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp.'s "Premyo sa Resibo" promo.

A month later, Dolor was deluged with calls

SEE 'SHOCKED' A6

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER Sunday
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

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Gonzales wants House leftists labeled Reds

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Philip C. Tubeza

AND YOU THOUGHT THE Cold War was over.

National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales is proposing to "label" left-leaning party-list candi-

GONZALES A4

Solon shot dead at church

Aide also killed in brazen attack in Mt. Carmel compound

THERE'S NO STOPPING CHRISTMAS at the Davao City town plaza all decked out in the glowing trappings of the season and swathed with the Davaoenos' sentiments for the country's most beloved feast. Nightly, residents congregate at the plaza to breathe in that spirit of peace and goodwill that only the day of the birth of Jesus Christ can inspire.

DAVAO PLAZA PHOTO STORY A3

By Philip C. Tubeza and Nancy C. Carvajal

ABRA REP LUIS BERSAMIN Jr. and his police bodyguard were shot dead by two gunmen yesterday after the lawmaker attended a niece's wedding at Mt. Carmel Church in New Manila, Quezon City.

The 62-year-old Bersamin, a member of President Macapagal-Arroyo's party Kabalikat ng Mamamayang Pilipino (Kampi), had just left the church on Doña Juana Rodrigues (formerly Broadway) Avenue and was walking back to his car when attacked.

Senior Supt. Magtanggol Gatdula, district director of the Quezon City Police, identified the bodyguard as Adelfo Ortega.

Gatdula said Bersamin was preparing to board his Ford E150 van when one of the gunmen shot his bodyguard behind him and then fired at the surprised lawmaker.

Both men were shot in the head and the back, Gatdula said.

The attack came in the wake of claims by officials of an alleged plot to assassinate Rep. Prospero Nograles, majority leader of the House of Representatives, and the narrow escape from a car bombing of another congressman, Rep. Robert Jaworski Jr.

Witnesses said the gunmen escaped on a red motorcycle. Gatdula said the getaway vehicle was found abandoned on Aurora Boulevard corner Bulacan

SOLON A11

WHAT'S INSIDE

THANKSGIVING
32 fishermen stranded by "Seniang's" wrath rescued after six days at sea off Eastern Samar
ACROSS /A15

RANDY DAVID:
At the most visible level, this crisis manifests itself in the distrust of the Filipino people for nearly all their politicians regardless of where they stand on issues.
OPINION /A13

BLAME GAME
GMA's unpopularity doomed Cha-cha, says ex-chair of Constitutional Commission.
NEWS /A2

PUBLIC BEWARE
Primer on how to tell fake peso bills and coins.
TALK OF THE TOWN /A14

Malacañang: Don't grandstand at the grandstand

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Jerome Aning

DON'T GRANDSTAND AT THE grandstand—that was Malacañang's appeal yesterday on the eve of what could be the biggest protest rally under the rule of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Seeking to quell Palace anxieties, Roman Catholic Church organizers said today's planned massive rally at the Quirino Grandstand would be held "in an environment of prayer."

Today's assembly is scheduled to start at 2 p.m.

"We are expecting about half a million or thereabouts," CBCP spokesperson Msgr. Pedro Quitorio said.

He said marchers could carry banners from their points of origin all the way to Taft Avenue.

In a statement, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye aired an appeal "for calm and sobriety" during today's rally triggered by attempts by Ms Arroyo's allies in Congress to fast track charges in the Constitution.

"We ... urge all those who would participate in the prayer rally to heed the call of the church leaders and not turn [it] into a political circus or a venue for grandstanding," Bunye said.

Malacañang and the House of Representatives had backed down from their move to convene a constituent assembly without the Senate and appeared puzzled why the organizers were still bent on pushing through with the rally.

"Peace and unity are also the primordial concern of this administration and we are one with our religious leaders in bringing these aspirations into fruition," said Bunye.

Military and police forces have been placed on the highest state of alert.

MALACAÑANG A19

'What-did-Eggie-tell-Letty?' contest: And the winners are . . .

By Letty Jimenez-Magsanoc
Editor in chief

THE WINNING ANSWERS TO the Dare to Ask contest ending Nov. 30 confounded by myself and the business founding chair, Eugenia "Eggie" Duran-Apostol are the following: First prize, Ed Gomez of Unit 3A Wendia 1 Bldg., 120 Rosemoor St. Legaspi Village, Makati City. His entry was: "To be recognized for doing something you love doing is unbelievable."

Second prize goes to Ramon Arcenas of 1865 Sagta St., DVR, Makati City. His entry reads: "Can you imagine us and the Dalai Lama and Gandhi in the same list as Asian heroes. Who would have thought?"

The third prize is awarded to Imelda Nicolas of Unit 14 K, Annenado West Backend Center, Makati City. Her entry reads: "I was informed by Time our heroes' awards means we are to be shot at the Luneta, are you ready?"

There were several others that echoed the winners' entries notably that of Dongdia M. Rosa, Ph.D whose entry was: "Heroes? We're just doing our job and enjoying it immensely."

In such a case, Eggie and I considered the wording of the entry. Darren had the edge with the word "unbelievable." Which was exactly Eggie's and my sentiments about the Time awards.

We said to each other, Can you believe this?

In between breaks in the Time shoot, Eggie and I (we found out later) were thinking the same thing: This is unbelievable. "Who would have thought?" (Enzo J. Ramon Asensio) "Who would ever thought we would get this far (from Klein, Joseph S. Craig of Unit 1221 Bldg. 1215 Guadalupe Rlte. JP Rizal, Gumba Makati City).

Now it can be told. Eggie wasn't telling me anything funny. She and I were into the third hour (past 11 p.m. on a grey November) of posing for the Time photographer, and we were clean out of humor.

I had put in a whole day's (and night's) work. Eggie had her regular frenzied dancing session with her amigas. At our age, we can no longer pull all-nighters.

By the way, the age factor dam-

WHAT DID A6

MUCH-AWARDED she past 20 years, Cory Aquino was thrilled about this one: For the first time, all her 4 daughters—Viel, Kris, Ballsy, Pinky—were present, an honor by itself, the proud mom told PDI. The People Power icon rejected Time's 65 Asian heroes' award now at MK's Rizo-Cuetan.

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

'Unpopular GMA may have lost Cha-cha'

By Norman Bordadora

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO'S UNPOPULARITY may have doomed the campaign for constitutional reforms, according to the political science professor who chaired the Constitutional Commission that drew up the draft of a new Constitution in 2005.

Dr. Jose Abueva, a former president of the University of the Philippines, said the outcry of partisanship and the personalistic psychology of Filipinos may have set back the campaign for change as many switched to focus on the Arroyo ouster proposal (e.g. like the Pres-idency, and "see on the substance" of Charter reform.

"Many people would rather focus on personalities. The President has 60 percent unpopularity and she is the epicenter of Charter change," Abueva said.

"Charter change has political support because of personalities, not on substance," he added.

Abueva, a member of the 1971 Constitutional Convention, made these comments after Malacañang virtually abandoned the campaign for constitutional reform, whether via a constituent assembly or constitutional convention route.

But Abueva said he was not disappointed by the President's decision to set aside Cha-cha amid the growing concern that it was dividing the country.

He said he admired both Ms Arroyo and House Speaker Jose de Venecia for taking up the responsibility to push for constitutional change despite strong resistance from influential sectors like the Church, the opposition and the media.

"What can you do versus public opinion when the media, especially the bourgeois and ABS-CBN, [are] reversing the negatives of Charter change? When your editors are anti-Gloria, they are anti-Charter change," he said.

Another constitutionalist, this time from the group opposed to Charter change, said Ms Arroyo's decision to postpone it was an opportunity to undertake genuine political reforms, particularly in the electoral system.

"Let's hope this opportunity is not wasted," said lawyer Christian Monsod, one of the framers of the 1987 Constitution and former chair of the Commission on Elections.

He said Ms Arroyo was right when she said there would be a proper time and opportunity for Charter change when the Filipinos find it "needful."

"This means there should be massive public information on the proposed Charter changes. The surveys show people don't want to be rushed into things," said Monsod, a convenor of the anti-Charter change group Con-Ver-Gence.

Abueva said the Charter Change Advocacy Commission (ADCom), chaired by Los Manolos Lavesarez, did its job of promoting the substance of constitutional change across the country, but was no match for the partisanship and focus on personalities rather than substance.

"You're either for or against Gloria. People are not interested in the substance of Cha-cha and prefer to focus on personalities," Abueva said.

"The real reason for the proposed changes are educated and set aside because the focus is on [Ms Arroyo]. Ito [Gen] tapos. We don't look forward to the future, not on system change. This is the kind of politics we want to change," he said.

Abueva said the President, De Venecia, the ADCom and the people's initiative groups like Sigaw ng Bayan and the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines have nonetheless planted the seeds of Charter reform.

"Next year, we believe the people will again call for Charter change even after the elections," he said.

"There will be no more excuse," he added.

Constitutional reforms are necessary, "objectively speaking," he said.

"It can be postponed but it can't be stopped," he added.

Monsod said the public opinion surveys that showed the public's distaste for Charter change and the threat of massive protests when the House tried to force constitutional changes were what influenced the administration's decision to shelve Cha-cha.

"Those who supported moves to change the Charter may have wanted in their support because of what they saw," he said.

Sigaw ng Bayan, the group that petitioned for a people's initiative that the Supreme Court rejected, has accepted that immediate constitutional reform is no longer but the active support of Ms Arroyo and her allies in Congress, said the group's spokesperson Raul Lambino.

Lambino won't blame the President and other proponents of Cha-cha for moving their backs on Charter change. They are politicians first and foremost and they are subject to pressure," he said.

DR. ABUEVA

Despite remarks, Japan confirms attendance at Asean meet next year

By Nikko Dizon

JAPAN HAS CONFIRMED ITS AT-tendance at the rescheduled 12th Asean Summit in Cebu next month, despite earlier remarks by its top envoy to the country about the Philippines' diminished credibility over the postponement of the regional meet, an official privy to the summit preparations said yesterday.

The official, who asked not to be identified, said Philippine Minister Hiroto Abe will be at the meeting representing one of the six dialogue partners of the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

But a formal announcement is being held pending similar confirmation from the other partner states, especially China and South Korea, said the official who said he lacked official clearance to speak on the matter. The other dialogue partners expected at the summit are India, Australia and New Zealand.

"She will proceed to Cebu right after his visit to Europe," the official added.

Despite the postponement of the Cebu meetings, she went ahead with a scheduled visit to Manila and held bilateral talks with President Macapagal-Arroyo.

On Tuesday, reports quoted Japan's economic minister Akira Amari as having "serious" in his

Twist in 'Nicole' case: Gov't now taking Smith side in custody issue

By Nikko Dizon

IN A CURIOUS LEGAL TWIST, Subic rape victim "Nicole" is now joined against her former defendants—the Philippine government—in a battle to keep her convicted rapist, US Marine Daniel Smith, in a Philippine jail as well as to question the constitutionality of certain provisions in the US-RP Visiting Forces Agreement.

Nicole's private lawyer, Evalyn Ursua, yesterday said "Nicole" would file a motion on Monday to stop the Court of Appeals from shutting on the feet of Lance Corporal Smith or be transferred out of the Makati city jail and back to US custody pending the appeal of his Dec. 4 conviction.

Ursua said Nicole will point out that she had filed a petition questioning the constitutionality of some provisions of the VFA before the Supreme Court as early as June 16, 2006, and therefore the CA should not preempt the [the high court] on the matter."

On the other hand, Smith's murder bid is being backed by Nicole's former lawyer from the Department of Justice, who argued that Smith's "continued custody of the US Embassy was in line with the VFA.

The Department of Foreign Affairs has also warned that the decision of Makati Judge Benjamin Pozon to keep the US Marine at the Makati jail "could have serious repercussions" on our diplomatic relations with the United States.

In a 15-page petition in intervention filed Friday, the DFA warned that: "The government's adherence to its treaty commitment is truly imperative. Any act of deception therefrom will markedly diminish our credibility as a member of the international community."

There is a provision in the VFA that states that accused visiting forces would stay under the custody of US authorities "until conclusion of judicial proceedings." The US and Philippine governments both agree that this means the convicted Smith can stay at the US Embassy until his appeals before the higher courts are heard.

On Dec. 11, or 10 days after convicting Smith, Judge Pozon denied for lack of merit Smith's bid to be returned to US custody. According to the Makati judge's interpretation of the VFA, US custody of Smith was "terminated after the promulgation of his judgment of conviction."

The US Embassy said Pozon's ruling "reflects a misunderstanding of Philippine obligations under the terms of the 1998 Subic judicial proceedings." US Press Secretary W. Joseph Mussomeli has expressed his concern on the matter.

Meanwhile, the 22-year-old Smith remains at the Makati city jail but not inside a cell. He has been given his own space at the jail's visitors' room and is now being guarded day and night by US troops by personnel.

Typhoon victims' lives slowly returning to normal, says DSWD

By Cynthia D. Balana

THE VICTIMS OF storm Typhoon "Seniang" were slowly getting their lives back to normal, as only 61 of the 366 evacuation centers remained open, Social Welfare Secretary Esperanza Cabral said yesterday.

Cabral said only 3,844 families, or 18,897 persons, were still at the evacuation centers, down from the 11,555 families, or 58,126 persons, who had sought shelter at the height of Seniang.

"The decongestion of evacuation centers shows the situation is going back to normal and the victims are slowly recovering. Our goal is to immediately close all evacuation centers," Cabral said.

She said relief operations were still going on for the nearly 800,000 persons, or 155,640 families, displaced by the typhoon.

She said that as of Dec. 14, P2 million worth of relief assistance had been released to the affected areas from the combined resources of the Department of Social Welfare and Development, which provided P1.3 million; the local government units concerned, which released P661,000, and nongovernment organizations which gave P18,000.

DSWD field reports indicated 19 persons were killed, 36 were injured and six were still missing as a result of Seniang.

Reports also said 50,343 houses were damaged—8,439 of which were totally destroyed and 27,193 partially damaged. The provinces of Capiz and Aklan in Region VI suffered the most number of damaged houses at 11,000, the reports said.

Cabral said the DSWD's Disaster Response Operations Monitoring and Information Center at its central office in Quezon City was closely coordinating with its regional offices on the retrieval of the damage caused by the typhoon and to identify the needs of the displaced families.

Donations for the victims are still being accepted at the National Resource Operations Center in Pasay City (tel. 8526068) or DSWD-NCR (tel. 9527107); the DSWD-National Capital Region at Legarda, Manila (tel. 7344116), and all Petron gas stations. MSB a donors report

More steel spans built, says DILG

By Norman Bordadora

A TOTAL OF 217 PREFABRICATED steel bridges under a presidential project being implemented by the Department of the Interior and Local Government have so far been completed, according to Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno.

"This is in line with the continuing government initiative to provide easy access to goods and services for people living in remote barangays," said Puno.

Puno said that 58 more bridges under the President's Bridge Program (PBP) with a funding of P4.65 billion were to be constructed soon. The program is being implemented with financial aid from the Australian government.

The program, which covers 11,025 linear meters of bridges, is expected to develop and enhance the capability of local government units (LGUs) in planning, designing and installing steel bridges.

The PBP also includes transferring the technology of constructing steel bridges by tapping locally available labor and involving the participation of local officials in the program, according to Puno.

The LGUs provided counterpart funding for the project totaling P1,872 billion with another P281.9 coming from the national government.

"Now on its second phase, this project aims to provide all-weather access to the country's remote barangay using prefabricated modular steel bridges designed for heavy truck loads," Puno said.

The secretary said all bridge components were manufactured from high-quality steel and fully galvanized (hot dip) and conformed to internationally recognized standards.

LGUs undertake almost all aspects of the construction, from the detailed engineering, construction of substructures and approaches, installation of the superstructure and hauling of the materials, to the acquisition of the rights-of-way.

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Who is telling the truth?

A Report by the House Majority Rainbow Coalition

How we are to change the 1987 Constitution is an important question. But how we do it is *not* half as important an issue as that of simply getting the job done.

We in the Majority Rainbow Coalition of the House of Representatives cannot deny the urgency of our country's need for a new beginning.

At a caucus last Monday, December 11, we decided to continue—with deliberate speed—the campaign for Charter Change that will enable our nation to modernize and match East Asia's economic tigers in prosperity and stability.

1 The Majority Coalition's overwhelming decision is to call for a Constitutional Convention, whose delegates would be elected simultaneously with national and local officials on May 14, 2007. On December 14, the House approved a motion to archive Resolution 197, killing the initiative to convene a Constituent Assembly of Congress.

2 The Majority Coalition remains deeply sensitive to public opinion. By calling for a Constitutional Convention, we responded positively to appeals of the Catholic Bishops led by Archbishop Angelo Lagdameo, the Iglesia ni Kristo of Executive Minister Eraño Manalo, the El Shaddai charismatic movement of Bro. Mike Velarde, the Jesus Is Lord movement of Bro. Eddie Villanueva, and the Baptist churches under Bishop Benny Abante as well as major business and civic groups.

3 The Senate has declared repeatedly over these past two years that it will agree to nothing less than a Constitutional Convention—and not the Constituent Assembly favored by the House—to amend the 1987 Charter. Because time is vital and we can no longer deny the urgency of constitutional reform, the Majority Rainbow Coalition has taken a deliberate and difficult step—approved overwhelmingly in caucus—in favor of a Constitutional Convention. We ask the Senate to muster immediately the constitutional requirement of two-thirds vote of its members to call for the election of a Constitutional Convention—if it is sincere with its pronouncements. It now turns out that the Senate is against it. So who is speaking the truth on Charter change?

4 We continue to believe that a Constituent Assembly is the simplest, most effective, and fastest way of managing Charter reform. But because the Con-Con is favored by our top religious leaders, we pursued this option, though it will cost anywhere from P7–P10 billion.

The Majority Coalition remains consistently focused on pushing for Charter change because our country must complete its modernization in the next few years—or forever remain a backwater of East Asia. We need to lift the protectionist provision, to open the economy to foreign direct investment that will set up hundreds of factories to provide tens of thousands of jobs and raise the incomes of urban and rural Filipino workers.

5 With the unicameral parliamentary government we seek (to replace the presidential system), we want to put an end to our democracy of deadlock; continued fighting between Malacañang and the Senate; continuing conflict between the Senate and the House; repeated impeachment, coup and destabilization attempts; and poisonous and destructive politics that have kept our people poor and our economy lagging behind the East Asian economic tigers.

The House has consistently outperformed the Senate in legislation. It initiated landmark bills deemed vital to national survival and stability—the monumental EVAT law being a recent example. It is hailed by the international community as the savior of the economy, yet which activists protesting it burned President Arroyo's effigy ten times and Speaker de Venecia's effigy seven times. As of last October, the House already approved on third reading a total of 1,023 bills (29 of which have become law). Of these bills—many of local application and hence anticipated by ordinary Filipinos in our districts—993 remain stranded in the Senate. The continuing conflict between these chambers—not to mention the monumental wastage of time and resources—are compelling arguments for a shift to a unicameral parliamentary government.

6 Our parliamentary government can be built on the model of successful parliamentary systems in Europe (such as those of England, Germany, Spain, Italy, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland which have attracted our professionally skilled OCWs), Australia and New Zealand, and in Asia's most prosperous states: Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and India. Eventually we propose a federal system similar to that of the United States.

7 Despite unfair criticism, the House has kept its focus on other major and urgent concerns while discussing Charter reform in earnest. As Bicol lay in the typhoon's ruins, Speaker Jose de Venecia and the Bicol representatives—Joey Salceda, Luis Villafuerte, Edcel Lagman and their 96 other colleagues from Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao—raised P250,000 from each to create an immediate relief fund of P25-million for the typhoon-ravaged areas. Mrs. Gina de Venecia and the congressional spouses sent ten truckloads of relief goods. The P25-million and the immediate efforts are modest, but they were unmatched by any local group is contribution.

8 The House approved the 2007 National Budget as early as October. We now ask the bicameral committee led by Sen. Franklin Drilon and Rep. Joey Salceda to reconcile the Senate and House versions and have the Budget measure ratified by both chambers before the Christmas break.

9 Speaker de Venecia and Rep. Salceda, backed by Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya, Jr., are also set to sponsor any day now the P12-billion fund to rebuild and rehabilitate the typhoon-damaged Bicol (Region 5) and certain areas of Regions 3 and 4. The fund will be financed by budgetary realignments, global grants, official development assistance, and concessional loans to be extended to the provinces, cities, towns, and barangays of the affected areas. President Macapagal-Arroyo supports this initiative and has already released P3 billion for typhoon-ravaged areas.

10 In the early 1990s a similar fund—the P10-billion fund—sponsored by then Reps. de Venecia and Rolando Andaya Sr. was key to the successful rebuilding and rehabilitation of earthquake-damaged Dagupan City, Baguio City, La Union and parts of Pangasinan and Nueva Ecija. Still another fund initiated by de Venecia—and supported by then Sen. Macapagal-Arroyo—was the P10-billion fund, which successfully rehabilitated Pampanga, Zambales, Tarlac and Bataan from the destruction wrought by the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo.

WE BELIEVE:

The struggle for Charter reform is hard, but we cannot slacken. It is really about enabling everyday Filipinos to have a say in how national society is ordered, for what purposes, and for whose benefit.

Charter change will compel our politicians to stop depending on sheer popularity to win elections. And it will require our political parties to propose alternative policies and set national goals.

We must restore to our people the hope that tomorrow will be better, and that hope is to be found—not in some foreign land, among some alien people—but here at home, in the land of our forefathers.

Pimentel: Look into Naia 3 angle in killing of gov't lawyer

By Philip C. Tubeza

SOLICITOR GENERAL HECTOR Bellosillo might have been murdered because of his persistence in digging into the alleged irregularities behind the construction of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3, Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said yesterday.

Pimentel said police authorities should look at this angle amid the frustration of the victims' family and the public over the lack of progress in the probe into the assassination of Bellosillo, 57, and his son, Benedict Paul, 22, a week ago.

"There are theories that say that Bellosillo was killed because he was assigned to track down the anomalous circumstances that attended the building of the Naia Terminal 3," Pimentel said.

Bellosillo was the lawyer of the government in the arbitration cases filed by the consortium Philippine International Air Terminals Company (Piatco), and its foreign partner, Fraport of Germany, with the International Chamber of Commerce in Singapore and with the International Center for the Settlement of Industrial Disputes in Washington, D. C.

At the time of his death, he was also representing the government in the Piatco Unit 3 case before the Pasay City Regional Trial Court, which sets to the power of determining just and fair compensation for the terminal that Piatco built.

Pimentel recalled that the late Judge Reynaldo Gregorio of the same Pasay RTC was killed several months ago after ruling in favor of the government's bid to expropriate the modern aviation terminal.

Pimentel said government investigators should also look into the possible involvement of drug traffickers in the double murder case.

He said he received information that Bellosillo was assigned to investigate some drug cases involving powerful people in the government.

"No matter what the motive was in the killings of the assistant solicitor general and his son, we condemn their murders and call on the investigative agencies of government to use nobility to look for, arrest, prosecute and punish the gunmen and the instigators or masterminds who were responsible for the senseless shooting crimes," he said.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Sunday, December 17, 2006
3rd Sunday of Advent

Zephaniah 3:14-18

The Lord is here

Cry out with joy, O daughter of Zion; rejoice, O people of Israel! Sing joyfully with all your heart, daughter of Jerusalem!

Yahweh has lifted your sentence and has thrown your enemies away. Yahweh, the King of Israel is with you; do not fear any misfortune.

On that day they will say to Jerusalem: Do not be afraid nor let your hands tremble. Yahweh your God is within you, Yahweh, a saving warrior. He will jump for joy on seeing you, for he has settled his love. For you he will cry out with joy as you do in the days of the Feast.

2nd Reading Philippians 4:4-7

The Lord is near

Rejoice in the Lord always. I say it again: rejoice! Let your generous disposition be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, together with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. Then the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Gospel Luke 3:10-18

The one to come

The people asked John, "What are we to do?" And John answered, "If you have two coats, give one to the person who has none; and if you have food, do the same."

Even tax collectors came to be baptized and asked him, "Master, what must we do?" John said to them, "Collect no more than your fixed rate." People serving in soldiers asked John, "What about us? What are we to do?" And he answered, "Don't take anything by force or threaten the people by denouncing them falsely; be content with your pay."

The people were wondering about John's identity. "Could he be the Messiah?" Then John answered them, "I baptize you with water, but the one who is coming will do much more. He will baptize you with Holy Spirit and fire. As for me, I am not worthy to untie his sandal. He is armed with a winnowing fan in those his threshing floor and gather his grain into his loft. But the chaff he will burn with fire that never goes out."

With these and many other words John announced the Good News to the people.

Communion

Rejoice, shout, sing, be glad, and exult! We are released from judgment and God is in our midst. There is no reason to be discouraged. Our God is rejoicing over us and singing over us! Can you feel Him? He is there in these words, look, people, others, and his baptism ask for God's peace stands poised over us. What are we supposed to do? Share food, clothing, shelter. Stop being greedy and stop stealing from others. Jesus here, we believe, rejoicing.

Are we sleeping? Are we living with unforgiveness, our hearts wandering? And this is only preparation, aren't waiting our very eyes. The Good News is yet to come!

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TAKE A BOW Bows to (from left), organists Alejandro Consunji Jr., Ardel Coloma, conductor; Simon R. Puzon of Credit Suisse, Eduardo H. Yap, chair, Ateneo Fideles organizing committee; Emilio Singson, president of the Management Association of the Philippines; Fr. Antonio Ma. Rosales OMI; Daniel Santiago, tenor; and George Yang.

ADESTE FIDELES

Carolling for Sorsogon typhoon victims

By Fe Zamora

PITTI TEE AWESOME BAROQUE rumble of the Santisima de Sto. Sacramento in Ateneo Padi as backdrop, world-acclaimed Filipino tenor Diomel Gamongan led the country's top classical singers and concert-attending choirs in something for the benefit of typhoon victims in Sorsogon.

Thursday night's concert in a church ushered in the Christmas season and organizers hoped that holding concerts in churches, a tradition in other Roman Catholic countries, would become part of the Philippines' own Christmas tradition.

Gonzaga's powerful rendition of the world-loved Adeste Fideles (Christmas carol had the languished listeners in such rare spellbound, setting the mood for compelling soprano Rachelle Gonzalez, Camille Lopez, Karla Concepcion and tenors George Yang and Frankie Bautista Jr.

The celebrated tenor swept the audience with his "Joy to the World." (He was delighted in a lively trio with Lopez and Gutierrez in the popular "Twelve Days of Christmas.")

Ardel Coloma—masterfully conducted the Manila Philharmonic Orchestra, all vocalists and choir groups in an explosion of pure music in Handel's grand Hallelujah Chorus.

Instrucht's resident organist Alejandro Consunji Jr. II, who had a command performance before Queen Sofia of Spain, played the organ.

Christmas for children, childlike

But it was the playful transportation of the song "Do You Hear What I Hear?" by the Mandaluyong Youth Choir and the Chiong Kui Shek College Youth Choir that reminded the audience that indeed, Christmas is for the children and the childlike.

"If it's for a good cause, people will come," Evelyn Singson, president of the Management Association of the Philippines, said after the sold-out concert.

Dubbed Adeste Fideles, the concert was sponsored by the MAP and the Instituto de San Antonio, with Credit Suisse as co-sponsor, and held for the benefit of the victims of Typhoon "Milenyo" (Sr. Sorsogon and the MAP's Management Education's Mediatrix).

How idea was born

The idea of holding a concert in a church came from business-man and organist Daniel Palma de Yap, chair of the Adeste Fideles organizing committee.

Yap was hooked by an advisory committee headed by Rafael Ferdinando with Sacramento parish priest Fr. Antonio Ma. Rosales, Abakal Prieto and Ateneo Music Department rectors.

Yap said holding concerts in a church had become a tradition in many European countries.

Enriching Philippine tradition

"Hopefully, this concert will become a local tradition during Advent and add to our other (Christian) church-based Christmas celebrations, like the Simbang Gabi," he said.

The planning of a concert in a church started in June, with Yap choosing a repertoire of Christmas carols and finding the right singers to interpret the beloved songs.

"It was just so difficult, except for Gonzaga who had a right schedule," Yap said the because.

The 16-song concert also featured the Coro de San Antonio, conducted by Josefina Dapit-Guevarra, and Coro Tomasino, conducted by Ronan Nerwa.

The youth choirs from Chiong Kui Shek College and Mandaluyong City were conducted by Irma Tan-Ita and Isabel Tan Trinidad, respectively.

Gonzales . . .

From page A1

classes as communists in session rooms, particularly soldiers and policemen, against voting what he calls democracy's enemies into the halls of Congress.

In an interview with anti-con dzRH radio presenter, Gonzales said: "There will be plenty who will run in the party-list in the coming elections and we have to describe them all. As national security adviser, it is important [for me] to see solutions and police when groups are being used by the communists to continue their bad intentions on the public."

He proposed that an independent group be formed to give a "neutral description of each political party."

Gonzales was adamant about labeling the political parties for the benefit of the soldiers. "These should be no partisan politics inside the armed forces. As a citizen of the republic, they should focus on choosing what is right in the coming elections."

Left gaining seats

He noted how the left-leaning groups have been getting more seats in the House of Representatives since 1998 when sectoral representatives were voted into office rather than appointed by the President.

Based on data culled by Ateneo Research, only two of the 15 party-list representatives that won in 1998 were leftist Dadalhan and Mitra-ati; in the 2001 polls, seven out of 28 party-list winners were left of center. Their number increased further in the 2004 elections when 38 of the 24 party-list members were leftists. Congress can have up to 50 sectoral representatives but the 15 party-list members because a representative can sit in the House of Representatives by garnering at least two percent of the votes cast.

"My only interest is that communists should not be allowed to enter Congress because a big accident will happen to our democracy. We do not believe in democracy, they look at the weaknesses of our democracy and [use those] to strengthen their ranks. That is wrong," Gonzales said.

'We have to be vigilant'

In Kidapawan City, Gonzales warned on Friday of the possibility of a communist takeover in government if people would assume "to support its front now operating in various forms and disguises."

"We have to be vigilant if we don't want a communist takeover," he said during the presidential peace and order meeting chaired by North Cotabato Gov. Manny Piñol.

Although Gonzales did not say which groups were fronting for the communists, authorities had earlier named Bayan Muna, Kilusang Mayo Uno and other militant groups as the legal arm of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP).

Officials of the said groups, who are often referred to as militants, denied any ties with the underground communists.

Proper rally

Gonzales said the current political situation was being taken advantage of by the New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the CPP, with the help of leftist organizations and militant groups.

Gonzales said the threat of a communist takeover was also bolstered by the support of major sectors of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the rebel group Jemaah Islamiya.

He said people should be vigilant and assist but this should be at maximum limit for today's peace rally, which was being spearheaded by the Catholic Church.

Getting senile?

Malacañang party-list Rep. Crispin Beltran yesterday scored Gonzales for warning that leftist provocation were out to sabotage today's anti-Charter charge rally at the Rizal Park.

He said Gonzales' allegations were unsubstantiated and accused him of using the communist threat to justify the administration's failure to pass Team EMILY and the rerun group Jemaah Islamiya.

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He said Gonzales must be getting senile. Can't he think of anything new to say? Mrs. Arroyo, push the panic button, not me, because he keeps recycling old reports that have never been substantiated," Beltran said.

"He doesn't even have the imagination to think of new allegations or the creativity to come up with something more plausible. The only sickness that could happen [today] is overdose of boredom with the speeches of Philippines (1899 and the successive groups it swore with," he added.

The lawmaker said the Arroyo administration was "the one with a deadly allergy to street protests and mass gatherings, especially to those which the powers-to-be deem to be a political opposition."

Beltran said today's prayer rally "is a testament to the potency of collective action."

He said that even if the security was packed and as one of thanksgiving for the defeat of the unconstitutional assembly, it still sent shivers down the spine of the "administration, hence Gonzales's bogus security reading."

Insecure administration

"Brainwashing and its allies try to diminish the prayer rally as somewhat inconsequential, but at the same time it can't help but smell a big deal out of it by dominating newspaper columns and shows. These are definite signs of a highly insecure administration," Beltran said.

He said that members of militant people's organizations and progressive party-list groups Anakpawis, Bayan Muna and Gabriela Women's Party would join the rally in force as an unusual and support the prayer rally. #rich thorlie G. Bolinas, Inquirer Mindanao

She thought . . .

From page A1

informing her that she had won a million pesos.

"But I ignored the calls," she said in an interview during the award ceremonies at the Philtrade office, private partner of the SSS and Negros.

Penaya Jr. Benito is a cartographic unit staffer married by the SSS, and Negros ends the objective of motivating consumers to abstain ask for (cash) advances (they purchase) goods and services.

The progress will help boost the tax collection drive campaigns of the SSS in plugging billions of pesos in tax leaks due to non-issuance of receipts and misdeclaration of sales.

Consumers simply rent in their receipt numbers and there are given raffle numbers which are entered into a monthly raffle. The program, which started in June 2006, has already given out P12 million in prizes.

Dodot attributed her hesitation to her fear of scams and hoaxes. Because of this, the 25-year-old resident of Bicol Inc (about Sorsogon) almost missed it.

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"Normally I would have just shredded the Penaya Jr. Benito website (www.penayajr.com) [no such] or called their help line at 338-9777. I would have gotten all the info I needed," she said, on hindsight.

Fate, however, was smiling on the young woman. A few days before the end of the 60-day period, a distant relative who worked for the SSS dropped by Dodot's house and told her about her windfall.

Dodot immediately went word to PhilPhil, the BOI and Negros, and prepared for her eight-hour trip to Metro Manila.

"It's surreal," she said. "Every day I have almost people winning the lottery, the sweepstakes, raffles at malls, but I've never met any of them. Now that I've won, I believe."

Grand prize draw

The Penaya Jr. Benito Grand Christmas Draw is on Dec. 20 where another P12 million in prizes will be given out bringing the total cash payout for 2006 to a whopping P36 million. Winners are given 60 days to claim their prizes.

Dodot said she wanted to invest her prize money in a small business, if not in Bicol-Sorsogon, namely in her parent's hometown of San Bernardo, La Union.

"Mom's Day (tribute) now. I might as well start a small business with the money. The timing couldn't be more perfect," she said.

Dodot's advice to aspiring winners? Temper caution with optimism.

"My fantasies almost won me a million pesos. I should have at least tried to check if I had won, but I didn't. I was fortunate someone went out of her way to inheritance," she said.

Penaya Jr. Benito is easy. For details, text PHILHELP to 37377 or call Tel. No. 338-9777.

'What-did-Eggie-tell-Letty?' . . .

From page A1

turned the stones. "By saying we're Asia's heroes over the last 60 years, they're betraying our ages," was the story of Leonardo Cantu of Bacoor, Cavite.

Another from Shalmai Macias goes: "Did you know that to be included among Asia's heroes over the last 60 years, you should look over 60? Ouch!

"From Bob Gilmore: "Is the award for Asian heroes over the last 60 years or for those over 60?" from Aida Mojica- Taligang recounts no eye-level to really 60s after 60 years of working.

If so, it means that direct from my mother's part, clean, peaceful sounds. I went straight to the body-body, of two social studies journalism.

Let me clarify guys.

For the record the hit in Time's Asian heroes order is the number of years that the world's first news magazine began publishing in Asia. Not the second, its parent Time was co-founded in 1923 in the United States by Brent Hadden and Henry Luce.

The metaphors don't "trace" to the 60. Or look 60. Which is not saying I'm one. This is just to stress that you don't have to have lived six decades to be considered finally heroic.

For instance, Kang Chol Hwan, a survivor of North Korea's gulags camp, safely defected to South Korea to expose the horrors of Kim Jong-Il regime is only 38.

As for Eggie, she will have to speak for herself.

Somewhat risque

There were as well many entries that were somewhat off-color. Like Rebecca C. Bartolomeo: "Hey look, Letty—he gaspo memon [he's good-looking] this photographer. But oh, oh, don't he have bad B.O. is open?"

Another from Dani Ingrid A. Gaspar: "Do you see what I see? Look at the guy taking our picture, he ripped to wickedly-sexy."

You get the drift!

The Time photographer was an okay guy, and some of us do eye. Eggie and Yeye will be supposed to be having media right before our eyes (The expression shocking, not his fine fit for the day, was getting to him, too, no doubt). He kept pulling up his pants. Eggie and I exchanged knowing glances. We hope no one was on spy (spies) but to the Big Brother.

Thanking Marcos

Besides (at least three) from Leonardo Cantu of Block 30, Lot 60, Camella, Bacoor, Cavite, suggested: "We should thank Marcos, he made us heroes." Darn.

A hint the makes sense: Eggie was telling me that, "I spoke in English [Another, publisher] about the stories and he agrees you simply deserve a decent raise. Indeed it is. So with me, too. Thanks for that story, Ardel Rosales.

Words from the wise

Michael Lamaroma Bendor read my mind: "Why only us? How about the rounder others who slowly fought for the country's freedom and made this country free?" (It's here up to us mini—tiggie's and I— since Time discovered our so-called heroic qualities.

If I were asked about my microphone here for the last 60 years, I would say the Filipino added whole leaving Churchill had described as "secret's cream."

Frank Cezanne Cordeilla: come as Oprah-ish reminder that we can't have enough of: "We both worked hard and succeeded. But where in the world does success come before work?"

To all the above, I tried to give you a sense of the outcome of the nearly 2,000 entries. That's about all of it. Congratulations to all participants who sent in their entries by e-mail, snail mail and text.

Thank you for being a good sport, for humoring us, for being part of us. That's what the process is all about.

And now for the best part

Winners, for whom, when and how to get your fabulous prizes (I'm sure the Quinos, please accept) Dennis Leung, product manager of the business marketing department at 897-8888 local 204 during office hours, or his cell phone no. 0923-9 890516.

THE WORLD'S FIRST GREEN CHURCH is launched on the Smoky Mountain in Tarlac during the start of the nine Dawn Masses that lead up to Christmas Eve.

For once, Senate, House agree on something: English as medium of instruction

By Philip C. Tubeza

PUBLIC TRUST MAY NOT BE EYE TO EYE ON most issues these days, the Senate and House are apparently agreed on one thing—the need to make English as the medium of instruction in Philippine schools.

House Deputy Majority Leader Eduardo Gullas yesterday said he had been assured by key senators that they would work for Senate approval of two House education bills, the first which would reinstate English as a teaching language, and the second, which would decentralize the massive payroll system of the Department of Education.

"We've already talked to Senate President Manny Villar, Senate President Pro Tempore Juan Ponce Enrile and Senators Edgardo Angara and Serafin Lawson, and they are all absolutely supportive of both House-approved bills," said Gullas, an education official who authored the two bills.

Liz Pilar Hap, Cynthia Villar, the wife of the Senate President, is a member of one of the education bills.

House Bill No. 4708 seeks to revive English as the medium of instruction in all school levels, doing away with the bilingual language policy.

Payroll decentralization

HB 5579, meanwhile, proposes to break up the DepEd's huge payroll system into regional units to speed up the processing of the paychecks of the country's 800,000 public schoolteachers.

The House passed the two bills on third and final reading in September. Both measures have been awaiting Senate action.

"Our sources are definitely very encouraging. We have that the Senate President is committed to passing both bills. We are therefore really confident they will approve the twin measures shortly," said Gullas.

He said the progress of the two bills in the Senate was stalled by the reorganization of the Senate's education committee.

Pilarito gave up his seats as Senate education committee chair to concentrate on his job as Senate President Pro Tempore. The committee's work is now being handled by two subcommittees chaired by Angara and Lawson.

The Cebu lawmaker noted that while most Filipinos were sentimental that English mastery fell to improved job opportunities, national proficiency in the language had declined by 16 percentage points in the past 12 years, as shown in a March 2006 Social Weather Stations survey.

English competency

The survey showed that only two of three Filipino adults, or 65 percent, understand spoken and written English. Some 14 percent said they were not competent at all in spoken and written English, Gullas said.

In the December 1993 and September 2000 (SWS) surveys, three out of four Filipino adults, or 75 percent, said they understood spoken and written English. Only seven percent said they were not competent at all in spoken and written English, he said.

Gullas said the results of this year's National Achievement Test also showed that fourth-year high school and Grade 6 students received mean percentage scores of only 47.73 percent and 34.01 percent, respectively, in English.

In the payroll decentralization plan proposed under HB 5579, payroll services units are to be established in every DepEd regional office, except Metro Manila, Cavite-Laguna-Batangas-Rizal-Quezon, and Mindoro Occidental-Mindoro Oriental-Marinduque-Romblon-Palawan.

TANDUAN

MRS. TANDUAN

Envoy's ladies mark Christmas

ALL INDONESIAN LADIES ARE INVITED to grace the All Nations Women's Group Christmas party on Dec. 21 at 2 p.m. at the home of Indonesian ambassador and Mrs. Iwan Tasil, Jalan Jenderal Sudirman Blok, Makati City.

Mrs. Juliana Caroline Tandjung will deliver the welcome remarks while Ambassador Tandjung himself will deliver the keynote address. They will be introduced by ANWG president Cristina Cando in the office chaired by Lolita Escobar Mirpuri.

The Indonesian Choral Group will render musical numbers while folk dances will be performed by the Ramon Magsaysay High School Dance Troupe. All ANWG scholars, members and friends have been invited.

Highlight of the affair will be a mini fashion show featuring the Indonesian ladies in their costumes as well as the other ANWG women in theirs.

PAMASKONG HANDOG 2006

Timely Pamaskong handog to the new Filipino heroes

The essence of a true Filipino Christmas will be experienced in full by the Overseas Filipinos Workers (OFWs) and their families as the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, the agency tasked to look after the interests OFWs, presents "Pamaskong Handog"

Through Pamaskong Handog, OWWA hopes to inculcate in the OFW communities the positive values of family orientation and social consciousness. The project also recognizes the contributions of the OFWs to national development.

"PAMASKONG HANDOG" FOR THE OFWS and their families it a package of programs and services that form part of the Christmas gifts of the agency for the OFWs and their families coming from various worksites overseas, all over the country and from all walks of life. The Christmas Package includes "Pamaskong Salubong," "Family Day," "MOPIA," or Model OFW Family Award, "OWWAlah," and "Special Activities.

With the theme "Pistang Pasko sa Pamilyang OFW," OWWA's Pamaskong Handog hopes to inculcate to the OFW communities the positive values of family orientation and social consciousness. The project, which recognizes the contributions of the OFWs to national development, also extends a helping hand to those who have less in life.

Launched in NAIA on December 15, Pamaskong Salubong operations will be undertaken in NAIA and in the regions with international airports, Cebu, Davao and Clark. The highlights of Pamaskong Salubong will be the Presidential Welcome and the awarding of prizes to lucky OFWs.

The Presidential Welcome scheduled in NAIA on December 21 will have President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and Vice President Noli de Castro as special guests.

Under "Pamaskong Handog," lucky OFWs will be chosen every day starting on the program launching day to the Dominical Welcome Day. Three lucky balikbayan, one passport-jumping and one TV set are to be raffled off.

For rest of the project is the installation of a waiting lounge for Filipino well-wishers at the parking area at NAIA. The waiting lounge is equipped with TV video facilities that will show Filipino movies to make well-wishers while away the time while waiting for the flight arrival of the OFWs. The waiting area will also serve as venue for other entertainment programs that can be organized by project sponsors for the well-wishers. Free flowing coffee and mineral water is also available in the area.

Institutional giveaways will also be given to the well-wishers or the arriving/returning OFWs.

In order facilitate processing of the arrival documents and luggage of returning/returning OFWs, OWWA will ensure its institutional linkage with Bureau of Customs and Immigration.

In connection with the Pamaskong Handog project of OWWA, the regional offices will celebrate the annual Family Day for returning OFWs and their families. While affording the OFWs a festive homecoming, the family Day will also be an opportunity for the OFWs to share information about their working conditions and the conditions of the Filipino communities in their respective jobsites.

The OFWs to be chosen for the Salubong and family participants are the Filipino leaders or active partners of OWWA in the quest to facilitate coordination and support to OWWA's activities in the country. It is also a way for OWWA to acknowledge the contribution and support of the FILCOM leaders or partners to its on-site operations.

With the theme of "Pasko ng Pagkakaisa," the Family Day will give out "Excellence Awards" to OWWA scholars. Likewise, post humous awards will also be awarded to the deceased leaders of FILCOM and Family Circles. Recognition awards will also be awarded to OWWA institutional partners including FILCOM leaders who already went home for good.

OWWA has conducted a search for the OFW who will receive the Model OFW Family Award. OWWAlah Incentives will come from the poorest of the poor who will be receiving prizes that they can use for income generating activities.

Paying tribute to overseas Filipino workers

EMPHASIZING ITS UNWAVERING COMMITment to the welfare of the Philippines' modern-day heroes, the government led by the Overseas Workers Welfare Association (OWWA) recognizes the contributions made by overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) to the country's economy.

For many years, during this time of the year, OFWs come to the rescue with their remittances thus strengthening the hold of the economy to overcome global or regional crisis.

With this in mind, OWWA recognizes their efforts to give their families a better life as well as the important role they play in our society.

With the annual Pamaskong Handog, as OFWs, the leading government agency tasked to ensure the welfare of Filipino overseas contract workers does not only encourage and motivate them in life, it is the government's way of thanking and paying tribute to the OFWs.

The Christmas activities, with the theme "Pistang Pasko sa Pamilyang OFW," hopes to inculcate to the OFW communities the positive values of family orientation and social consciousness.

The event started with the awarding of Model Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) Family of the Year Award (MOFYA). This year three finalists are given recognition for their and their families' efforts in managing the effect of overseas employment to family life. Families from Regions IV-A, IX, and XI were chosen from among the 17 families for their exemplary accomplishments as OFWs.

Vice President Noli de Castro handed over the awards to Myrna D. Panay, Melchor G. Coupon, and Eugen H. Aparis, together with their families, as the grand champion representing Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao, respectively. The awarding ceremonies was held at the Glorietta Macapagal Auditorium, Landmark Plaza.

On Dec. 15, the Pamaskong Salubong will be launched at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport which will be highlighted by a Dominical Salubong. President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will welcome the members clay before and their families. The President will award three lucky OFWs coming home from Asia, the Middle East and Europe or America with the "Pangkabuhayan Prize" consisting mainly of a passenger jeepney sponsored by Landbank and Development Bank of the Philippines. The tricycle units are donated by the Philippine National Bank, Amonay, and OWWA. The daily activities of Pamaskong Salubong will be undertaken until Dec. 31 at major international airports in Clark, Cebu, Davao, and Zamboanga to make the OFW homecoming memorable and hassle-free. There will also be daily raffle draws to be participated in by the OFWs and the winners will be awarded gift package courtesy of Philam life, Eastlife, PHIC, Holiday Inn Clark, Quadrillion Group, Marina Gas, Tony Fast.

Related activities with all the activities in the nationwide OFW Family Day where festive celebrations are celebrated in the 17 regions on different dates from Dec. 3 to 23. This is held in conjunction with the Salubong activities for the returning OFWs during the Christmas season. Aside from activities such as Filipino games and entertainment, OWWA will give excellence awards to its scholars, post humous awards to deceased overseas Filipino community leaders and recognition awards to OWWA institutional partners.

Another significant part of the event is the OWWAlah where chosen beneficiaries who come from the poorest of the poor will be awarded prizes that will be used for income-generating activities to improve their socio-economic conditions. The Pamaskong Handog programs and activities are supported by DOLE, DFA, POEA, MIAA, ISD, BOC, Globe Telecom, Microsoft, Starmall, and Smart.

OVERSEAS WORKERS WELFARE ADMINISTRATION

Regional Opeations Coordination Service

2006 Family Day

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'Keep seamen on ball'

THE DEPARTMENT of Labor and Employment has ordered the suspension of all the country's maritime training schools as it ensures that the seafarers they graduate meet the requirements of the global maritime industry.

Labor Secretary Arturo Brion directed the Maritime Training Council (MTC) to conduct the inspections in accordance with the 1978 Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW) Convention.

Brion said the MTC, an attached agency of the Department of Labor and Employment, will inspect the maritime training providers' facilities for maritime safety courses and applications of the mandatory management training courses on for the Filipino seafarers.

He said the inspection was in line with the government's efforts to ensure that the country's maritime school graduated seafarers who met the standards of competence specified by the 1978 STCW Convention.

Brion explained that compliance with the STCW Convention would ensure the employability of Filipino seamen and women in the global maritime industry.

He noted that the International Maritime Organization required seafarers on board foreign vessels plying international waters to comply with the STCW's standards of competence. Jeremy Andrig

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4. Mr. Romelo Apostol - Kidney failure survivor
5. Mr. Juanito Vitor - Psoriasis survivor
6. Mr. Arnold Corpus - Parkinson syndrome survivor
7. Ms. Nancy Pagador - Hepatocellular carcinoma survivor
8. Mr. Antonio Pena - carcinoma of the liver survivor
9. Ms. Jessie Mahad - Alzheimer's disease survivor

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

Vigilance isn't sexy

IF ETERNAL VIGILANCE IS THE PRICE OF LIBERTY, what is the price we pay for vigilance, even of the less-than-eternal variety? The rallies-cooperation and the ill-disguised contempt of the powers-that-be.

Much has already been said about the import or impact of today's Church-led prayer rally at the Luneta, but the most inaccurate, the most specious, ultimately the most

EDITORIAL

ungracious statements have come from the Arroyo administration's hard-hitting hard-liners.

After the administration's complete retreat on the issue of fast-tracked Charter change, officials such as Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman and National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales, among others, have attempted to parry the blows of humiliation with some notable counter-punching of their own. These counter-attacks have turned out to be low blows—all of them.

The hard-liners said: Today's rally will gauge how much public support there really is for the anti-Charter change position. Wrong. Public outrage over the House majority coalition's blatant, self-serving attempt to change the rules for amending or revising the Constitution has already abated, in large part because Speaker Jose de Venecia has sounded the retreat. Public resentment remains considerable—if there is one thing the general Filipino cannot stand, it is being played for the fool. But a week is a lifetime in politics, and in the last week much has happened to lessen the people's indignation.

Happened deliberately, we must emphasize, because the behavior of key administration leaders in the past week was designed specifically to dissipate public anger. Speaker De Venecia's Dec. 9 news conference; Malacañang's modest distancing from the controversial House resolution convening the constituent assembly; De Venecia's decision to archive the resolution; the President's indirect but still unmistakable message that now was not the right time to campaign for Charter change—all these were strategic responses with one objective in mind: to stop the rally, or at least to lower the turnout.

To say this way, and then to raise the bar of expectation, is to engage, yet again, in duplicity and deception.

The hard-liners also said: With Charter change on hold, no valid reason exists to continue with the rally. That it is still pushing through only means that self-indulgent religious leaders want to enjoy their political influence and the chance to flex their political muscles. Wrong again. There is a litany of reasons to push through with the prayer rally. Chief of them is summed up in the succinct words of Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, the president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines: "It is a religious response to a political situation. Our government needs to be prayed for."

That includes praying for the enlightenment of the state winners who currently run the government. But—and here is the point—citizenship is part of governance too. Today's prayer rally reminds us that we must keep vigilant over our own responsibilities as citizens. Ever since the President's crisis of legitimacy erupted last year, the country's Catholic bishops have played the burden of political resolution on the citizenry. Today's prayer rally provides religious leaders—and we include others of non-Catholic persuasion—with a decisive teaching opportunity: a reminder that moral values undergird the political structure, and that political legitimacy is ultimately moral legitimacy.

Our new Chief Justice

SEPARATE OPINION

Jaguard A. Cruz

I DECIDED WITH HUGE PERSONAL JOY to sign the report that Senior Associate Justice Reynato S. Puno has finally been appointed Chief Justice of the Philippines directly after the retirement of his immediate predecessor. His elevation as head of the judiciary, albeit somewhat belated, is a recognition of his impressive qualifications as a jurist and his regularly deserved recommendations as a private citizen.

I met Rey during the 1990s when I was chairman of the Code Commission, where his fiancée, Lin Delgado, was the head of the research staff. She was my favorite student at the UP College of Law, together with Hyppolia Sollesta (now Justice Mathay) who was the Clerk of the First Division of the Supreme Court then I later chaired. Lin and Rey corresponded regularly while he was taking up post-graduate courses in the United States, and his first objective upon his return was to make his sweetheart his wife.

I was one of the sponsors at their wedding and received a similar honor when they remarried their marriage seven after 25 years of bliss, mind contentment and professional success. Rey had become my colleague on the high tribunal and Lin was now the Clerk of the Supreme Court en banc. The couple was particularly close to me and my wife Sally who had also become their sewing. They kissed her hand whenever they met her, but I was not so crushed to be granted the same honor. Justice Puno and I were co-equals on the Court.

When they were appointed to the Supreme Court in 1993, Rey and Justice Jose C. Vitug, a close friend of mine in the academe, called on me to tell me their good news. I was happy to welcome them to our exclusive fellowship. Subsequently, I had the pleasure of hosting somewhere over many of their colleagues: During our deliberations, their justice took at the time did not deter them from running servants with

Separate Opinion

the older members who were not necessarily not always better.

I remember that one time when Justice Puno did not completely agree with my position on and frankly said so. He respectfully stated his reservations which reflected his conviction that state interest that I interpreted the draft informed my sensitivity. He did not insist on his objections and said he was not filing any dissent. After the session, Justice Puno approached me and whispered that Rey had been hurt by our exchange. I immediately called Rey up and offered my apologies but he graciously dismissed them.

I have complete confidence in the new Chief Justice's sense of justice and love to appointees that he will feel bound to obey Presidents Macapagal-Arroyo's suggestions in recognition for his appointment.

The integrity of some members of the Court is not for sale, and Chief Justice Reynato S. Puno is the embodiment of the incident virtues. Appointed originally by President Fidel V. Ramos, this independent jurists was the writer of Quin v. Torres, 235 SCRA 1-94, in question just one telling example of his working objectivities, that involved a favorite project of his hometown.

This was the "National Computerized Identification Reference System" that Malacañang would devised supposedly for the people's convenience in transactions with the government. Justice Puno and the entire penchant of a legislative enactment that could not be issued by the President. No less importantly, he felt it violative of the right to privacy guaranteed by the Bill of Rights, of which he was a vigilant and ancient champion.

As Justice Puno put it, the Order "presumes the people to surrender their privacy by giving information about them on the premise that it will facilitate the delivery of basic services.

Given the recent lamentable power of the executive, only the indifferent will fail to perceive the danger that EO No. 308 gives the government the power to compile a devastating dossier against unsuspecting citizens."

He also wrote several other important decisions of the Supreme Court, among them Gonzales v. Intelligent Text 200 SCRA 798, on the Escalante massacre in 1985; Tatad v. Secretary of Energy 346 SCRA 336, declaring the Oil Deregulation Law violative of the Equal Protection Clause; Iglesia ni Cristo v. Court of Appeals, 259 SCRA 529, on freedom of expression; and Estrada v. Desierto, 353 SCRA 452, sustaining the respondent's succession to the office still being claimed by the petitioners.

His more outstanding dissents are those he submitted in Santiago v. Commission on Elections, 270 SCRA 106, and the recent case of Lambino v. Commission on Elections, GR No. 174153, Oct. 25, 2006, where he again argued that there was a sufficient statute implementing the initiative under Article XVII of the Constitution. Tesa v. Secretary of Natural Resources, 277 SCRA 128, which was a challenge to the Indigenous People's Rights law, he voted against the petitioner although I was his ravine godfather.

I congratulate Chief Justice Reynato S. Puno and wish him bodyguard in his new career as the highest judge in the land. We take the retirement of kindly jay a the absence of his departed and beloved Lin, but he assured me that she was also sharing his happiness "above us (sun."

What should we do?

MOMENTS

Fr Jerry M. Orbos, SVD

ONE SUNDAY MORNING LAST WEEK, WHILE I was on my way to the kitchen to get coffee, I spotted some prayerful moments before our "Belen" looking at the Baby Jesus. After some moments, I noticed that Joseph and Mary were missing. Only the Three Kings were present, believing for Jesus. After my initial shock, I looked at Baby Jesus and jokingly asked Him: "Where are your parents?" (It turned out that somebody "borrowed them" for a Christmas program the night before!)

In today's Gospel (Lk. 3, 10-18), we hear John the Baptist giving a very clear answer to those who had asked him the question "What should we do?" If parents were to ask him this question, I'm sure he would have said, "Be present to your children!" How many children will repeat Christmas this year minus both or any of their parents either because they are away or because they have parted ways? How many children will have parents but who are not present to them, letting money, entertainment and other people take-in for them?

I'm afraid we are not very lucky with our "parents" in government either. We have very selfish leaders whose only concern is to survive, or to perpetuate themselves in power so that they can themselves continue to bond money and enjoy all the perks and privileges of public office at the expense of taxpayers. So much greed, so blatant and shameless. We shudder at the thought of some animals that feed on their young, but something of that sort is happening here and now to our poorest. It is time we have the kind of leaders and officials we have who lie to us, fool us, rob us and deceive us. And we let them do all these things to us.

* * *

John the Baptist spells out what we all should do, and that is to share. "Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none, and whoever has food should do likewise." Greed is the single biggest block to true love. It is also the biggest block to peace and progress in our country, in the world. The heart of the message of Christmas is that of love. If we don't love, then Christmas is just a sentimental tradition, an event that happened some 2,000 years ago. We make Christmas happen again whenever we love.

* * *

I had Mass at the Pag Ibig office in Makati, and I was edified to hear that officials and employees alike have decided to forego their Christmas party this year for the sake of our suffering brothers and sisters in Bicol. That's what we all should do. Perhaps we all, in our own way can make some sacrifice, especially this Christmas. Right now, stop awhile and ask the Lord what we can do for Him, especially this Christmas.

* * *

John the Baptist has a very specific message to the collectors in today's Gospel: "Stop collecting more than what is prescribed." Bull's-eye.

* * *

John the Baptist also has this message to traders and law-enforcers: "Do not falsely accuse anyone, and be satisfied with your wages." Bull's-eye again.

* * *

Fr Raul Gulanes, SVD, president of the University of San Carlos, proposes the "One Step Beyond" formula. He writes that in the big good things, we should go one step beyond what is asked and expected. In the things that we need to take, we should not go one step beyond what is necessary. Finally, in the things that we are not supposed to do, not only should we not take the step, we should even step one step before.

* * *

Christmas is about a God who sees our of His way to get involved with us. In preparation for Christmas, let us all go out of our way to meet our God, and prepare to Him a humble, concrete and genuine heart. Let us also go out of our way to reach out to our another, especially to the poor and powerless, and to our enemies and those who have wronged us. And let us go out of our "usual" ways and flee from the roads that lead us to sin and wrongdoings.

* * *

A Christmas moment happened as I was writing this column. A family that has just lost their mother dropped by and asked me to join them. And I'm glad I did. For hope we can do some loving and healing God at this Christmas, and drop our personal agenda and concerns to be present to other people. Remember, Christmas is not so much about presents as presence.

* * *

Have you noticed how beautiful the stars are at night? Have you experienced the serene of cool December mornings? If you have not, maybe you have been too caught up in the rush and have forgotten what Christmas is all about. Slow down and take time. Look inside your heart, and then look out. Look around you and look up. Then, say, "Hello, God. I am sorry for not finding time in our hearts, in nature and in people, especially this Christmas.

* * *

Life is indeed full of happy and sad events. Don't give up on your faith for God will keep you afloat. Just remember to roll on Him. For prayer request, text EHEO<space name><space request> and send to 2048 for Globe/Sun or 3900 for Smart. God bless you. Shama Mary loves you!

* * *

A moment with the Lord:

Lord, remind me what to do, so that I can find you, especially this Christmas. Amen.

Moral scandal

TWENTY-EIGHT YEARS AGO, WHEN THEY DIED, GRAPE-BRIDEGROOM SEETHA LALANG and seven people's lover this is a moral scandal that is difficult to understand through concepts and reason, the scandal of grieving children in the square ... shedding emotional tears at the funeral of the great "brother."

But the literature who symbolically represent the sensitivity of part of the people does overcome feelings. Grow hatred, but also great love. They and coincides with a feeling of liberation for the victims of the dictatorship. But for another substantial portion of the society, the buried dictator attracts feelings of regret for a past (which is) manipulated by nostalgia — and which fails to remind of the suffering it has caused to the opponents.

FOREIGN COMMENT

It is hard to admit, but part of Chilean society, not wanting to see the prisons crowded with opponents, dissidents disappearing, the tortured and the dead, has felt that to re-establishing order was a priority conquered to any other consideration.

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The war without honors

REVELLE

Ramon J. Farolan

IN JUNE 2003, IN A SPEECH DELIVERED AT West Point, President George W. Bush enunciated for the first time his "preemption doctrine" of a war to stop a war. The specific, avowed, by presidential speechwriter Michael Gerson, had down the presidency and justification for the invasion of Iraq—"the war on terror will be won on the battlefield."

On March 19, 2003, the United States invaded Iraq, citing the growing menace of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in the hands of Saddam Hussein. A few days earlier, Vice President Dick Cheney had declared that Iraq "is believed to still be covered in limousine." He also shot down the view expressed by US Army Chief of Staff Gen. Eric Shinseki that a far more vast phase in Iraq would require several hundred thousand troops. Shinseki was forced to retire not long thereafter.

Almost four years after the invasion, no WMDs have been found in Iraq and the country is now in the throes of a civil war with hundreds of civilians being killed on a weekly basis, even as the United States is hoping to figure out how to contain itself from the quagmire it created.

* * *

There is an interesting world on the Iraq war in the Dec. 11 issue of Time magazine. "Iraq: The Human Cost" is the title of the piece. The figures of those wars handed out during World War II or against only two that have been awarded during this war, which has now lasted longer than World War II. The blended of "Some" is American's highest military honor for bravery. It is the closest military equivalent of that is the medal for valor which has been awarded to 11 officers only, most by for actions carried out in the 1990s. Two of those awarded are now facing court-martial proceedings on those alleged participation in the February coup plot.

The article also notes that the same holds true for the second highest honors, the Service Cross. Of 98 DSCs awarded for valor in Iraq, 16 like Iraq War, only 10 have been awarded to date.

The Pentagon is now looking at new guidelines for commissioning among the services. The army "has displayed a standing guarantee in handing out the said level. Bronze Medal, it has given an astonishing 52,000 since Sept. 11, 2001 on men, passed article bravo valor. 1,300 for the Marines."

Part of the explanation for the large discrepancy is the fact that the process for getting medals has become more cumbersome. The nature of combat is also a big factor. There are fewer opportunities for individual heroics in a conflict involving improvised explosive devices (IEDs), or suicide bombers.

* * *

In Bill Woodward's recent bestseller "Imen of Bretlad," he recounts the experience of Frank Miller, a 22-year veteran of the Pentagon bureaucracy, it is no kind of irony that one doesn't come across in the medal reporting on the war.

Miller was head of the Executive Steering Group (ESG) that oversees the Iraq [illegible] among the different federal agencies.

In August 2004, Miller testified in Iraq with Gen. Peter Pace, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Miller kept asking the general questions. Pace was at all times the same question: What do you need?

"The division commanders with between 15,000 to 20,000 men and women said: Translators. The battalion commanders with 600 to 800 troops: Translators. Small scouting platoons were being sent to search homes, seal off areas, knock on and break down doors without translators who could speak Arabic.

"The shortage was unconscionable, Miller thought. If translators troops and troops couldn't talk to each other, the possibilities for misunderstanding were compounded. Misunderstood communication failures were occurring everyday. Sometimes the wrong, or partial might, as well go in blind. Nothing could identify the things of these tasks as respectful occupiers. Many were weeks of heavily armed soldiers with helmets and body armor, weapons at the ready, conducting house to house searches, interrogating, questioning, in communication, and seemingly uninterested in what the troops thought, felt or sensed.

"Miller wondered why an old civilian bureaucrat like himself had to show the military how they needed to translators. Frustrated by the delays, he asked the team with the commanders of the Marine Corps and the Gen. Chief of Staff of the Army and, finally with Undersecretary Pace, the National Security Advisor.

"It was time to fix it. After several months, the problem still had not been solved. It was less worse than a scandal.

One recent study that for a senior rebels had gone through Gulf Pair 1 more than 10 years ago and which listed them participate for commanders with the above-mentioned researches—more 10 billion a month—the need for translators would have been a priority even before the start of the conflict.

* * *

On the Aaron Sumrall: The government's explanation for the postponements—the approaching re[illegible] "freezing"—was criticized by Inquirer Trade Minister Peter Abaya who said: "It [whether Aquino started the agitation and the line that it would have passed by Congress] is a matter of conjecture. The postponement is commonly painful." Abaya's view is to say that the backsliding "robbed the credibility of the Philippine government." Those are strong words coming from a Liberal Party leader who [illegible] minister Ramon Mitra of the Philippines. It is difficult to believe that Ramal's comments do not reflect the views of his government.

Interesting, the Department of Foreign Affairs announced on July 20 that it doesn't have the Retired Chief Justice Andres Narvasa to be co-scheduled meeting in Manila.

Method to madness

RAY BRADBURY ONCE SAID: THAT YOU HAVE TO STAY drunk on writing, so that reality cannot destroy you. Sometimes I wonder how all the people who do not write or paint or sing manage to deal with the horror of everyday life. The beginning to think that there are things that even writing cannot save you from.

I have just realized that I can't write today.

That opens the door for all the other voices that surround me. Voices that I usually manage to tie together with the snowflakes on the palatine with a good cup of and morning sun on the wall. I suspect I'm going mad, or there are voices screaming in my head, but the said the mad never know they're mad, do they? Perhaps that's why they're mad.

REBEL WITHOUT A CLUE

Patricia Evangelista

"Every writer," says the fictional Bright, "without exception, is a masochist, a sadist, a peeping Tom, an exhibitionist, a narcissist, an 'injustice collector' and a repressed person constantly haunted by fears of impotency." As there are almost 200 reported writers who committed suicide, I suspect agreement. Bradbury, who managed to live to a happy old age, is the sixth person on long, I expect to see drops of blood forming on my forehead. My mother tells me that my paternal grandfather raged when his editor added a "very" to his stories, and I've been known to cry over misplaced semicolons.

But it's our passionate doubts or a lack of course that makes it impossible to fill 6,500 characters today it would be an outright lie to say there's nothing at stake about. There are so many, thousands really, reports tragedy story upon story, one massive cacophony over another. The pages on my homepage would be crowded with headlines and comments and red-inked four-letter words that can never be printed on this page. It's the sheer number of events—of deaths, of corruption, of the daily disillusionments when it comes to the people and institutions I was told to respect. I admit to a certain [illegible] attitude to what's happening in Hacienda Luisita.

Two days ago, Cebu Rep. Antonio Cuenco apologized for the mistake he made in supporting the House resuming the impeachment trial of Gloria. "I am sorry for the mistake," he said. "I admit, like cops, when we see them, we fear. He claims he actually prefers to have a conventional session, but he had to follow his party's stand. Unless men value morals, "I admit I have no brain," it doesn't work. I wanted to write about him, but really there is no one to be sure such a man. He's a politician. He's a liar. He's a coward. He admits to failure in failing to stem the "assault" by neighboring to drink at least many others like him may as on a non-personal way chair, smoking many the taxpayers' money—and much more frightening knowing that people like him could probably get elected anyway.

Yesterday, the UP Law Center side was canceled due to "security threats." Last night, over 200 names were name by fire. In Brazil, people are crammed into tubes stations, mourning farmers and wives live off donations from media entertainment and "sleep klandon." Reports came that social workers in Cebu were being [illegible] by a hacking group that said that "war is longer there." Iraqi factions's tigris Basin's dubious the incident might have left a lasting image in the President's mind, and "prompted her to launch the many missions." I never know that the duty to provide [illegible] was part of the job description of the President.

Recently the press has been nagged on [illegible] to [illegible] rule and accusations of an agenda. I've been called as enemy of the state by an old man whose this was closely coming red while he berated me with a cane. I've gained between Romanians who say that there are so many bad things happening in the country that it's impossible to ignore it's man's suffering for my generation. I'm 22. I was taught to celebrate Edsa, to fight more and not be frivolous, to stand for something, anything. I believe in truth, in democracy, in free speech, and the right of a person to call the President's husband a [illegible] moron.

Mark Twain once said that it is a writer's duty to awaken the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. Although I do not believe that completely—for I think there is a time not to remain, in desire, in dancing penguins and Manny Pacquiao—I also believe that there is some sort of natural balance that must be struck.

Someone once told me that chaos rules over command by the dread forces of the Philippines deserves it, because they opposed the government. "There will always be chaos in government," says another reader. "There will always be corruption, murder, rape, and the list goes on. Let God deal with them." I wonder if this is what many Filipinos think, that corruption and rape and murder are all inevitabilities, but as members we can focus on the bright and the good. I wonder if the person who wrote this would feel the same way if his girlfriend were raped, his brother tortured or his father thrown into jail without charges.

And I guess that's why I find myself coming to them of my computer today, running and rambling about being unable to write, and writing anyway. I still think it's the natural state of man to act, and not write, that keeps pounding away at keys and typing words in all caps in the end. In a country like the Philippines, I'll take madness over indifference.

* * *

For comments, last year, PM KIRBY, write, age, [illegible], message than send to 2048 for Globe Sun and 8582 for smart. E-mail at pat.evangelista@gmail.com

Pinoys in a 'Star Wars Spectacular'

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

FINDS UP COMICS MY MAKE SICK JOBS find the cast of "Star Wars" fans, particularly those who dressed as Darth Vader, Stormtroopers and all "Star Wars" movie costumed as their favorite characters.

But there is no doubting that the film franchise has become a major cultural phenomenon, and that its fan-based fitness has all around the world. Not all fans may enjoy dressing up as one of the many characters—humans, droids, Storm Troopers, extraterrestrial or both—but millions count the franchise as a major influence in the last 30 years or so, including those who have never seen any of the movies.

In my home, for instance, the love is so decidedly here been planning a small "Star Wars" party to re-enact the Star Movies shared-associated that we have watched together since the boys were little. And while the story is old, starting with Episode One "The Phantom Menace" and ending with Episode Six "Return of the Jedi," by my half-baked fan knows, the film saga opened with Episode Four "A New Hope," which, for the first time, actually begins without enough the tale.

Many new million people worldwide are due to see the [illegible] and are estimated 30 million fans are anything on TV will behold the "Star Wars" themed event, while well-known fans worldwide Boars (main episode out of boxes) representing planets such as Tatooine, Hoth and Endor will be [illegible] around the world, clad in Storm Troopers and the like-bing to homecast.

* * *

STORM three Storm Troopers are two Filipinos—Manny Mendoza and Ray Layag, the daughter of a friend, who will be one of only two Asian nonstormtrooper to be passable.

Mendoza and Ray represent the "Philippine Division" of the Storm Troopers' regiment, also as the "Old Ice Legion," also known as "Hoth's Fire," which hails itself as "The World's Deadliest Legion."

Lucas Films Fan Relations department, headed by three Stormers, put out a request for multinational Storm members who wanted to be considered. In all, more than 700 of the 3,500 fill-in in-group members around the world submitted videos. It was no easy feat to be chosen," Stormers said. "We had to send in a video for the [illegible] the physical fitness of the members (the Storm Troopers armor is described as being "not as favorable to the soldier") and the dedication that would be involved." A press release from the said member of which it is possible that Mendoza and Layag were the only Filipinos in the [illegible] Battalion! Stormers. "We were so overwhelmed with the response—stormers are the 501st members all over Japan."

* * *

Bill Layag says the thrill master chosen by Lucasfilm is God. Layag's mother, a Filipina living more than 10 years in Japan and raised in the United States, she trained the Golden Gate Stormers [illegible], also a part of the 501st, for their audition video. "Because of his impressive work, Lucasfilm asked Manny to lead the Stormers she who would be marching in the parade."

"The 501st Legion intends to honor Lucasfilm Celebs as honorary members," says Ray, "while the Philippine Outpost and the Cebu base sponsored and will promote him who is place to commemorate the event on Dec. 31, at the final driver released before the parade."

Bringing the Storm Troopers to march in the inaugural parade of Mayor Lito Atienza's second administration has been will be spending over $20 million to bring all 200 of the Storm Troopers, the marching band, the support staff and the Lucasfilm staff to Pasadena, paying for accommodations, air fare, meals and transportation.

"All of this because Gregg wanted to say 'thank you' to the 501st," says Ray, an active participant in various "star plays" and a member of many other Star Wars fan clubs around the globe.

And you thought being a "Star Wars" fanatic was just one big joke!

When the political system fails

PUBLIC LIVES

Randy David

POLITICAL LEADERS HAVE A DUTY TO MAKE sure that the decisions they produce in the national interest are also responsive to the legitimate expectations of their constituents. Politicians cannot perform their tasks as if they were mere consumers of a political order's legitimacy; they must ensure themselves continuously replenish that legitimacy. The traditional politicians in the Philippines, and in other countries as well, are learning this painful lesson today. They are likely to be penalized. If it were not so, the political system has no final source of repelling them.

The failure of a political system to maintain its legitimacy is a serious matter. Political leaders are sometimes willing to take risks in order to achieve ambitious, even left-centered hypothesis are tolerant to the legal system. Politics and law thus result in many embarrassing encounters of a major kind. Politicians may reflect the views of the people who make decisions on their behalf. Politicians who are unable to [illegible] the [illegible] of the [illegible] are likely to be penalized. If it were not so, the political system has no final source of repelling them.

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gentlest of voices they raised on street. It is also seen in their desperate shouts, electronic and the sound of fatality they represent when they will about to [illegible] government.

I think that what our people are seeking at this point is not an overhaul of the whole political order, but a collective resolve to allow our system institutions to work as they should. They want that an impeachment trial be conducted in a way that will restore to a change in the quality of our leaders. That a decision on the question of whether leaders keep coming up. The question of "who," however, takes a form of other more difficult questions.

Where do we find these alternative leaders? What assurance do we have that, once in power, they will not behave in exactly the same way as today's politicians? Aren't a society's politicians, after all, merely the reflection of the members of the society? In considering the political problems of our society, can we avoid inquiring into the nature of our economic system, our moral system and the rest of our way of life?

The complexity of these questions has overwhelm people often take refuge in the belief that all that [illegible] the status quo. President Arroyo has been the biggest beneficiary of the confusing [illegible] in the country's politicians.

But difficult as it may be, the problem is not insoluble as it appears. Just some said about the current source of problems typically because the conditions for solving them already exist. One of the conditions, to my mind, that has made it increasingly untrue of our political problems is the change in consciousness that has been quietly taking place among Filipinos in the last three decades. It has given birth to a new generation of middle class with modern expectations about governance, leadership and citizenship. It is this class that has been most vocal in demanding our democratic institutions from corruption.

These institutions are no longer just there to help us build them, live, die; they are still can by public ones with frantic manners. Granted, how this perspective, our political crisis is really a symptom of this discontinuity between image and performance. Many of the people who [illegible] the [illegible] institutions and want to end it. Many, it is true, are pining up their hands in surrender, but countless others persist in the fight to close the gap. They know this will not be achieved overnight.

Some of these are in the streets, in the kind of response that are generated by the growing frustration with the current political impasse. They say that while [illegible] the forces government strongly underlies the decision-behavior of the traditional politicians, they do not want to be [illegible] to the forces of religious hegemony, when president acted as the arbiters of political power. This morning is left and important, it should not be ignored.

In this regard, I am extremely gratified by the statement of Catholic Bishop Conference of the Philippines head, Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, on the nature of the "prayer rally" to be held today at the Luneta. "It is a religious response to a political situation. The government needs to be helped but," he added, "the [illegible] basic Church leaders are mindful of their moral functions. But one may derive to such tempered statements a wish to leave political advocacy and leadership in the laity. We must welcome this. Without the moral authority of the Church, there can be no legitimacy as communities in an increasingly differentiated world.

* * *

Comment to public.lives@gmail.com

THEY SAID

Heaviest burden

"The problem is that we have become more content to see the lack of food and jobs, services, or the selling of organs. It's the corrupt politicians and a government with no semblance of decency."

—Bishop Antonio Tobias [illegible] statement on Cha-Cha dialogs

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TALK of the TOWN

Please send feedback to jcsarmiento@inquirer.com.ph

Edna Juan V. Sarmiento Jr.

How to detect fake peso bills and coins

EVERY DAY, PESO BILLS AND COINS CHANGE HANDS IN COUNTLESS TRANSactions across the country, keeping the economy going. The pace of bills and coins changing hands this Christmas season will accelerate as people buy presents, food and decorations, and give cash as gift to kids, friends or loved ones.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas is known to print bills to cope with the growing demand in this season of gift-giving.

As of Nov. 30, 1.04 billion pieces of 5-peso coins, 257 million pieces of 10-peso coins, 271 million pieces of 500-peso notes, and 113 million pieces of 1,000-peso notes were already in circulation, according to the Bangko Sentral.

Also in circulation are counterfeit bills and coins, especially the 5- and 10-peso coins.

"The public should be aware of the existence of counterfeit bills and coins [this] Christmas season ... where there is a lot of money changing hands," says Ile de la Cruz, BSP director for corporate affairs.

Last month, an Inquirer report said bus conductors and tricycle drivers in Lucena City were refusing to accept 5- and 10-peso coins as payment, afraid that they may be counterfeit.

Maja Grazia Malic, a manager at the BSP cash department, advises the public to familiarize itself with the genuine bank notes and coins in order to spot the fakes.

Know salient features of BSP bank notes

TO ENABLE A CASH HANDLER TO spot counterfeit money, one has to be familiar with the genuine bank notes of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

Study the watermarks of each denomination of genuine Bangko Sentral bank notes. Get more take note and familiarize yourself or herself with the various characteristics of the following security features:

A. PAPER—The genuine note is printed on a special paper, which is rough when one runs fingers or her fingers through it. It does not glow under ultraviolet light. During the manufacturing process of the paper, the watermark, security fibers, security threads and iridescent band are incorporated.

1. Watermark—This is the silhouette of the portrait appearing on the face of the note. Sharp details of the light-and-shadow effect can be seen when the note is viewed against the light. The exposure of the features of the silhouette can be felt easily by running the fingertips over the design on relatively new notes.

2. Security fibers—These are realized as dark red and blue visible fibers scattered at random on both surfaces and can be readily picked off by using any pointed instrument.

3. Embedded security thread—This is a special thermal imprinted thread on the left center of the note during the paper's manufacture. It appears as broken line for the 50s, and 20s and a continuous line for the 1,000s, 500s, 100s and 100s.

4. Windowed security thread—The narrow thread is vertically inserted like "stitches" on the face of the note with "clear vent" of the numerical value to appear at irregular intervals in the form of rectangles or gates or gates to interpose depending on the angle of view. It appears on the improved versions of 100-, 500- and 1,000-piso and the 200-piso notes.

5. Iridescent band—The band is a wide, glittering gold with at its top with the numerical value printed in relief. This appears on the improved versions of 100-, 500- and 1,000-piso and the new 200-piso notes.

B. PRINTING—Generally, the imprint of the different printed features are well-defined, sharp and distinct. The finer line usually fill the main print on the letter and back designs of relatively new notes because of the unnoticeable thickness of ink deposited on the paper.

1. Portraits—Appears life-like. The eyes sparkle. Shadings are formed by fine lines that give the portrait a characteristic facial expressions, which is extremely difficult to copy.

2. Special numbers—Composed of one or two prefix letters and six to seven digits, which are clearly printed. The letters and numerals are uniform in size and thickness, evenly spaced and well-aligned. They show parallel sidewalker lights. A hand over with the "0" digit serial number at a specimen note and the no value on it is not legal tender.

3. Background and Intaglio Security Design—The background designs is made up of multicolored and well-defined lines. The floweth design is composed of fine, well-like colors creating lines of different thickness and textures even at the intersection.

4. Vignettes—The design on the back of the note is composed of lines and shades that are fine, distinct and sharp. The varying color tone gives a vivid look to the picture that makes it stand out.

C. ADD-ON SPECIAL FEATURES

1. Concealed value—Found only in the 1,000-piso denomination. This is invisible the lower left corners of the face of the note. It changes color from green to blue to green when the note is held at different angles.

2. Optically variable ink—A special characteristic of the 1,000-piso denomination, which is also featured on the lower left corners of the face of the note. It changes color from green to blue to green when the note is held at different angles.

These security features are easily recognizable by sight and touch alone. Instruments are not necessary. Make it a habit to feel and look at all notes being received so that the fingers and the eyes will become familiar with the features of the genuine Bangko Sentral notes.

Compare the doubtful note with the known genuine note of the same denomination and series.

In case one gets hold of a doubtful or counterfeit note or coin, contact the Cash Department of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas for assistance at:

• Currency Analysis and Redemption Sub-Group
Room 202, Second Floor, Multi-Storey Building, BSP Complex, Manila, Manila
Telephone Nos.: 524-2777 or 524-7011 local 2290

• Investigations Sub-Group
Room 302, Multi-Storey Building, BSP Complex, Manila, Manila
Telephone Nos.: 523-9808 or 524-7011 local 2580

or go to the nearest Bangko Sentral regional Office/Sub-Regional Office Unit in Angeles City, Baguio, Bicol, Bicol Area, Cabanatuan, Cagayan de Oro City, Cebu City, Cotabato City, Dagupan, Davao City, Dumaguete, Iloilo City, Iligan, Legaspi City, Lucena, Naga City, San Fernando de la Union, Tacloban, Tuguegarao City or Zamboanga City.

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Design and security features of the 1,000-peso bill

Watermarks of fake and genuine 500-peso bills

A 100-piso bill has a dotted line at right and a shiny strip at left. The earlier notes issued do not have these features.

Test your peso IQ

1. What security feature is found in the 1,000-piso note?
a) security thread; b) thermosensitive ink; c) optically variable ink

2. Which denomination has a watermarked portrait of Jose Rizal?
a) 20 peso; b) 100 peso; c) 500 peso

3. Which denomination has a concealed value?
a) 1,000 peso; b) 20 peso; c) 500 peso

4. Where is the watermark located in a note?
a) Left side of the face of the note; b) Right side of the face of the note; c) Center of the note

5. Which portrait is on the 100-peso note?
a) Ramon Magsaysay; b) Emilio Aguinaldo; c) Manuel Roxas

6. Which denomination has a pendant-mostly orange color?
a) 20 peso; b) 100 peso; c) 1,000 peso

7. What is the highest denomination in the present circulation coins series?
a) 5 peso; b) 1 peso; c) 10 peso

8. What is the lowest denomination in the present circulation coins series?
a) 5 centavos; b) 10 centavos; c) 1 centavo

9. What is the highest denomination in the legal tender notes in circulation?
a) 500 peso; b) 1,000 peso; c) 200 peso

10. What design is on the back of the 200-piso note?
a) Portrait of Jose Rizal; b) Portrait of Emilio Aguinaldo; c) Portrait of Manuel Roxas; d) Signing of President Macapagal-Arroyo

ANSWERS:
1 (a), 2 (a), 3 (a), 4 (c), 5 (b), 6 (c), 7 (c), 8 (c), 9 (c), 10 (c).

Distinguishing marks of counterfeit 10-peso and 5-peso coins

Counterfeit 10-peso note

Distinguishing marks of counterfeit 10-peso coin
Obverse
1) Obverse—Profile of Dr. Jose P. Rizal's profile bigger than genuine
2) Reverse—BSP logo (off-center)
Edge
1) Reverse—Elevated (with rounded edge)
Reverse
1) Reverse—Elevated (with sharp edge and interrupted seedings)
Metallic grade—Coarse (with bubbles)
Inner core—Pale yellow or yellow brown in color
Other characteristics—Slightly noisy in the touch magnetic

Counterfeit 5-peso coin

Distinguishing marks of counterfeit 5-peso coin
Obverse
1) Obverse—Profile of Emilio Aguinaldo (details of the profile are not well-defined, compared to the genuine)
2) Reverse—BSP logo (appears blurred) and 12 scaling border design is occasionally off-center and location the tin
Letters and numbers—Wider than the genuine
Metallic grade—Coarse
Color—Mixed of the true dark yellow

Penalties

Revised Penal Code

- Article 163—Making and possessing and uttering (passing or circulating) false coins
  Prision mayor—6 years and 1 day to 12 years
  Fine—₱5,000
- Article 164—Mutilation of coins; importation and exportation of mutilated coins
  Prision mayor—6 months, 1 day to 6 years and 1 month
  Fine—₱2,000
- Article 165—Selling of false or mutilated coins, without connivance
  Prision correccional—from 1 day to less than prescribed in preceding articles
  Fine—none
- Article 166—Forging treasury or bank notes or other documents payable to bearer; importing and uttering such false or forged notes and documents
  Prision mayor—12 years, 1 day to 14 years and 8 months
  Fine—₱10,000
- Article 167—counterfeiting, importing and uttering instruments not payable to bearer
  Prision correccional—2 years, 4 months and 1 day to 6 years
  Fine—20,000
- Article 168—Illegal possession and use of false treasury or bank notes and other instruments of credit
  Prision correccional—[years than one day to less than prescribed article]
  Fine—none
- Article 176—Manufacture, acquisition and possession of instruments or implements for falsification
  Prision correccional—2 years, 4 months and 1 day to 6 years
  Fine—₱10,000

Presidential Decree No. 247

Obligations, securities, stamps, franking or identification of BSP notes and coins)
Prision correccional—1 day to 5 years
Fine—₱10,000

BSP Circular No. 61-Series '95

(Counterfeiting of gold bullion Philippine currency notes)

- Chapter 2—Reproduction and/or use of facsimiles of legal tender Philippine currency notes
- Chapter 3—Reproduction and/or use of facsimiles of legal tender Philippine currency notes
  Prision mayor—3 years, 1 day to 10 years
  Fine—none

EZ2 SIX DIGIT
1 9 3 6 4 2 9
SUERTRES
3 4 6 7 5 0
6/42 Luzon/Vis-Min
9 18 19 30 35 38
P8,785,513.80

32 floating at sea for 6 days saved

By Von S. Lobro
Inquirer Visayas

TACLOBAN CITY—FISHERMEN PLUCKED OUT from the sea 32 persons whose boats ran smack into the middle of bad weather in Eastern Samar at the height of Typhoon "Seniang" on Dec. 9.

Eastern Samar Gov. Ben Evardone said rescued were fishermen aboard two half submerged fishing boats, FB JL 3 and FB JL 4. The ill-fated fishing boats FB JL 3 and FB JL 4 had 15 crew members and 17 crew members.

Evardone said the fishermen were rescued separately, some off Dinar town, located 81 km north of the capital town of Borongan, and the rest 145 km south of Borongan.

Evardone said the two fishing boats were kept floating by mysterious containers that they were carrying.

The silkwood the boats' crew members were in the boats despite the big waves and strong winds.

Last Thursday, the rescued fishermen were immediately brought separately to the district hospitals of Dinar and Guiuan for treatment.

Evardone said those rescued were Edgar Gerano, Oswaldo Yap, Arbey Belocura, Boy Barcina, Joey Perjes, Jose Perjes, Ruzel Magtalbano, Marlon Bano, Oliver Ramo, Eddie Blaza, Kito Bagunas, Jimmy Pinlac Jr., Sonny Pinlac Sr., Bonjie Tabal, Bartolome Tabal Jr., Sonny Gonzche, Jose Barcina, Dinny Cabagnda, Bobby Bravido, Andhie Pigoro, Rolando Bonoza, Celestio Bravio, Edjar Tuinan, Jake Ramirez, Andy Alpasan, Randy Magbuyo, Rolmi Ocinda, Bene Bendon, Ricmale Abaa, Inocencio Tinsuan, and Rosario Mulit Bano.

Yesterday, the provincial government of Eastern Samar provided the survivors with land transportation to their hometowns in barangay.

Typhoon Seniang, packing winds of 120 km near its center with gustiness of up to 150 kph, made its landfall on Guiuan town in Eastern Samar on Dec. 9.

The typhoon aggravated the sufferings of people in the flood region who were reeling from the devastation wrought by tropical storm "Paeng" and earlier, Typhoon "Milenyo."

OFF TO MARKET Pigs being transported for slaughter are making their small and precarious bid in downtown Davao City as demand for meat peaks for the holiday season.

Politics, business seen motives in mayor's slay

DUMAGUETE CITY—Politics and business are the main motives in the murder of Malaun, Sarangani Mayor George Sahay, the Central Mindanao police chief said.

Sahay, 54, was shot by one of two motorcycle-riding men while he was driving near the town's public market on the afternoon of Nov. 11.

His murder outraged residents and civilian officials. They were not yet found to agree on the murderous of the case. Sahay was well loved by his people for his dedication to service.

Chief Supt. German Doria, Central Mindanao police chief, told reporters here on Friday they have now considered Sahay's assassination as solved with the identifications of several suspects, including the masterminds.

Doria said the resolution of the case started when they were able to get the cooperation of one of those who allegedly plotted against Sahay.

He said Demiddling Lali was the one who named the masterminds, the other co-conspirators and the guns for him who carried out the plot.

Doria said Lali had earlier surrendered to the police and executed an extra-judicial confession regarding the Sahay murder case.

In his extra-judicial confession, Lali identified Allan Ramiel as the gunman and his buds aga Abu Cabasan alias Abu Bahanay, Mounding Unay alias Mounding Bonaning, Badingan Gallacia alias Bad Boy and Mike Ramiel alias Mike Carbonnel.

Doria said Ramiel is now in the hands of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and their wan today he would be turned over soon.

Lali also made mention of several prominent politicians in Mindanao as among those who hired them to kill Sahay, he said.

But Doria said their names should be withheld until such time the police completed its investigation.

Senior Supt. Edwin Diaso, head of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group in the region, said it appears that there were two groups out to execute Sahay.

Diaso, also co-chair of the Task Force George, said the two groups had worked independently although they conducted simultaneous surveillance on the mayor's public activities, Inquirer Mindanao learned.

MILF denies role in al-Qaida, terror plots

COTABATO CITY—THE MORO Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) denied allegations made by security forces that linked guerrilla leaders to al-Qaeda militants and plans to carry out attacks in major cities in Mindanao.

MILF spokesperson Eid Kabalu made the denial after government soldiers claimed they foiled a bombing plot in Davao City by suspected MILF militants.

"It's not true. We are serious in our peace talks with the government," Kabalu told the Inquirer.

Maj. Agustin Dela Peña, Philippine Air Force information officer, said in a statement obtained by Inquirer that operatives of the Eastern Mindanao Command Group, consisting of the Army operatives of the 39th Air Intelligence and Security Squadron, and bomb experts from the 710th Special Operations Wing, recovered a powerful pipe bomb during a raid on a follower of MILF commander Abdul Morsang somewhere in Davao province.

Admitting that the suspected terrorists managed to escape before the raid, Dela Peña said the pipe bomb, placed in a backpack measuring about 30 inches long and which has a diameter of 3.5, can inflict a similar level of damage as that experienced in the 2003 Sasa Wharf bombing in Davao City.

"It is believed that it was manufactured by known bomber Abdul Matop Montang. The (improvised explosive device) had his fingerprints all over it," Dela Peña said in his statement.

Dela Peña said Montang is a renegade MILF member and has direct contact with fugitive terrorists Dulmatin and Omar Patek of the Jemaah Islamiyah.

Dela Peña said the plan was a joint effort by known terrorists identified with the group of Nasad Sung Abdul Rahman Cardin alias Cherik.

In the statement, he said information also revealed that the bombs were to be carried by MILF renegades Abi Gutoy and Sulli Ahmad.

But according to Kabalu, the names dropped by Dela Peña are not active in their organization.

"They are MILF before, but are removed them from our list," Kabalu said.

Kabalu said the accusation against them will not affect the peace talks set to resume in January next year in Kuala Lumpur.

The government and MILF have been negotiating a peace agreement for several months, declaring several times that they were near to signing a pact.

But the peace talks bogged down over MILF's demand to include close to 1,000 villages as part of their proposed Bangsamoro homeland within a referendum.

The government rejected the demand, saying it was against the Constitution. The government said it could only allow 500 predominantly Muslim villages to be included in the proposed Moro homeland. Jeoffrey Maitem, Inquirer Mindanao

A MILISIM guerrilla sniper practices his skills during a drill in the mountain camps of the MILF in Cluro/Dalo Ilmasan, Maguindanao. The MILF continues to strengthen its forces as it talks with government peace negotiators.

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NBI seizes pirated CD, DVD machines in Laguna warehouse

By Marlon Ramos
Inquirer Southern Luzon

BIÑAN, LAGUNA—THREE DAYS AFTER raiding a warehouse inside an industrial park here, agents of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) on Friday took custody of at least seven machines used in the manufacture of pirated compact discs and DVDs.

Armed with a search and seizure warrant, NBI agents arrived at the area at around 3 p.m. and started loading the machines onto five 10-wheel trucks. They also confiscated thousands of pirated DVDs and audio and video CDs placed inside boxes.

Roland Argallon, field operations division chief of the NBI, said it would take at least two days before they can take all the pieces of evidence from the warehouse.

The machines, he said, could be worth more than P400 million.

The seizure of the items was done in the presence of some barangay officials.

"It would really be difficult for us to remove the machines and other materials from here because there's just so many. The machines are also big. We're not even finished with our inventory," Argallon said.

Oliver Barsen, NBI Laguna director, said the seizure of the items were ordered by a search warrant issued by Biñan Regional Trial Court Judge Monina Arcilla.

He said they will bring the confiscated machines to the NBI warehouse in Manila for safekeeping.

"We will present these items to the court once the hearing begins," Argallon said.

Argallon said the raid at the warehouse would cripple the operations of the syndicate involved in selling pirated discs in the country.

He said the machines could produce over 300,000 fake CDs and DVDs daily. Most of the items are delivered to several malls in Quiapo, Manila, he said.

The NBI said it has already launched a follow-up operation to collar Willy Lee, the alleged financier of the facility at the Laguna International Industrial Park in Barangay Mamplasan here.

On Wednesday, around 30 heavily armed NBI agents managed down on the warehouse and arrested 12 Chinese nationals who were caught while operating the replicating machines.

The storage facility, registered as Bright Future Technologies, was the same establishment raided by the Calabarzon police and the Optical Media Board in April last year.

President Macapagal-Arroyo visited the area and led the inspection of the confiscated items after the first raid.

But the owners were able to resume operations after the court quashed the search warrant of the raiding team.

GIFT WRAP
Giant gift boxes adorn the town plaza of Davao City as Christmas Day draws near and visitors rush to places with holiday decorations.

Army battalion chief probed for rape try

MARBEL KABUGSALAN PROVINCE—An Army battalion commander is now under investigation by the 6th Infantry Division here after he was accused of attempted rape.

His supposed victim earlier filed a complaint against the officer, whose identity was being withheld pending determination of whether or not there was probable cause to charge him.

"This early, the 6th ID, upon instructions from Maj. Gen. Roberto Ancheta, has started investigation to investigate the commanding general is always associated with protecting the image of the division and as peacekeeping arm of the AFP," Col. Julieto Anda, chief of the 6th ID's civil military office, said.

But Anda said even as the investigation has already started, they have yet to take possession of the complaint.

The complaint, which was filed last week before Maguindanao Provincial Prosecutor Rodolfo Tamano, said the alleged attempted rape occurred on Feb. 17.

The complainant said she was earlier invited by the officer to attend a post-fiesta dinner party to be held at the battalion headquarters.

She said on Feb. 17, the official sent a soldier and fetched her from her home in Esperanza, Sultan Kudarat.

She said she was brought to the battalion headquarters.

But upon reaching the headquarters, she found that no party was being held.

She said the officer, a colonel, forced her into his quarters, locked the doors and began his sexual advances, Roberto O. Fernandez, Inquirer Mindanao news

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Yet to open and serve you in February 2007, our new headquarters will be at the **Fourth Floor of Equitable Bank Tower at #8751 Paseo de Roxas, Makati City.**

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SM City Fairview
2nd Floor, Unit 29

SM Southmall
2nd Level East Wing

SM City Pampanga
Annex Ground Floor

In the meantime, while we spruce up our new offices, you may reach us via our temporary mobile hotline

0917- 8326459
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and our able Customer Care Consultants will be more than glad to return your call as soon as possible. You may also call our regular hotline

755-1521

or email us at this address:

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INQUIRER Mindanao

Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Nico A. Alconaba

Small village triumphs over floods, war

THE COMMUNITY is not spared from government and insurgents' clashes. Here, residents carry their riches in the evacuation site with the help of Barmm Councilor volunteers.

By Geronilina Lacorte
Pagagawan, Maguindanao

FOR NORMA GUIAMENDAL, 58, a simple act of planting corn in her community in Barangay Pagagawan's sitio of Punol in Pagagawan, Maguindanao, is a great gamble with nature.

"Each year, when heavy rains come, the Pulangi River swells and eats up a portion of our land," says Guiamendal. She recalls how the river used to be 400 meters away from her neighborhood and how worsening soil erosion in recent years has brought the floodwaters to areas that it had already gobbled up a mosque, a marketstall and a five-hectare mango plantation.

Punol is just one of the areas below the 1,760-ha Bulldong Maridagao dam that gets flooded every time the dam overflows. The dam submerged five barangays when it was built a few years ago.

"Some of my neighbors were forced to transfer their houses every time the water got near," Guiamendal says.

But every year, people continue to face the risk even as they organize themselves to fight the disasters. Four times in the last three years, the footbridge that Punol residents built over the 40-m Pulangi River was carried away by rampaging waters. Four times, they have rebuilt it, Guiamendal recalls.

"After the flood, there's always something left from their crops," notes Thomas Aranyos, Maguindanao area staff member of the non-government Mindanao Interfaith Services Foundation Inc. (MisFi). The foundation has been implementing the European Union-funded program in the area.

"But in some areas, there are times when everything is wiped out," Aranyos says.

In 2005, the ELI-funded Community Disaster Response Center (CDRC) identified Punol as among the 62 disaster-prone areas in Maguindanao would initially benefit from its aid in the Ejmented People Programs (ADPP). The project primarily aims to bring back people who had been displaced by armed conflicts in their communities.

Natural disasters

"Although the program basically seeks to help internally displaced people take roots in their communities again, we discovered that aside from war, the displaced people are also battling natural disasters and other forms of calamities in their own communities," said Oudaye Sanchez, executive director of MisFi.

Flooding, after all, is just one of Punol's problems. About five kilometers away from the Davao-Cotabato highway, 2 km of which is totally impassable during heavy rains, the area faces the usual battleground of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and government forces.

Punol leads to another Maguindanao barangay of Inug-og, the birthplace of MILF founder Salamat Hashim and considered a heartland of the faction of the Moro rebellion.

At the height of the MILF and government fighting in 2000 and 2003, little Punol and Barangay Inug-og had been battle sites, while Barangays Lamog and Tenggal along the highway were stationed daily trained into a town-city of evacuees seeking safe grounds.

Reduce vulnerability

Although Punol was one of the worst hit by the war, it was never reached by relief assistance, Aranyos said.

The CDRC program seeks to reduce the vulnerability of the present and the most neglected people against disasters by increasing food sufficiency and strengthening people's livelihood, improving health and nutrition and introducing basic numbers and literacy skills, and most of all, increasing the community's resilience in times of disasters.

In July last year, the program shelled out part of the 1.16 million euros (P71 million) poured into 62 pilot barangays in Mindanao for the purchase of corn shellers and tractors in Punol.

The new facilities did not only reduce post-harvest woe and boost the income of village farmers. It also enabled the Punol Farmers Association (PFA) to earn enough and put up a small fund to address the most pressing needs of its members.

From last year's P17,000 earnings, the association was able to extend medical emergency loans, interest-free and payable up to the next harvest, instead of waiting for government help, it was able to share out some amount to help members affected by the recent floods.

When another flood hit the part of Maguindanao in October, the farmers' group bought seven sacks of rice as relief assistance to the victims.

Confidence

From such small efforts, the community started to regain the confidence that had been eroded by years of battling disasters. When the temporary footbridge was swept away by flood, the people set aside three days for "bayanihan" to rebuild the structure.

"By working together, we were able to restore confidence in ourselves, discovered self-reliance as a community," says Guiamendal.

She says the community was now planning to establish a multipurpose cooperative to sustain their initiatives.

The threat of a bigger flood, or even war, continues in this small village. But slowly and surely, people are learning to rely more on their collective strength to solve their problems rather than rely on government help.

The rampaging floodwaters that get bigger each year may still be beyond the community's capacity to solve. Aranyos says a seawall stretching for at least 2 km and costing millions of pesos is needed to protect them from disaster.

HOPE. Guiamendal of Sitio Punol in Barangay Pagagawan holds up a bunch of eggplant harvests. Despite the calamities, people gamble each planting season hoping there's something left of the harvests at the end of the year.

MOVING SPIRIT
Speaker Jose de Venecia speaks at the inaugural of the Hang Mualim sa Anak (ina) at the OSWD compound at Bonzon Hills, Quezon City. The rites marked the 2nd death anniversary of his daughter KC. The bereaved dad believed his daughter's spirit was touching him on the wings of a butterfly. (Right) President Arroyo joins the De Venecias (Gina is to her left) in celebrating the life of the De Venecia daughter, who perished in a fire at their Diamantina Village home.

Malacañang: Don't grandstand …

Front page 4

Initiated by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, the rally has drawn the support of an array of evangelical groups, from Bro. Mike Velarde's El Shaddai and Bro. Eli Soriano's Ang Dating Daan to Lord Lieutenant Penong Reyes and Iglesia ni Cristo.

Opposition politicians, labor and student activists, professionals and other members of the civil society have signified their intention to attend.

The rally will be capped by a Mass celebrated by Manila Archbishop Cardinal Gaudencio Rosales.

This will be at least the third time in less than 10 years that Church leaders will be taking their stand to mobilize a huge rally against what they believe to be unjustified efforts to change the Constitution.

In 1997, the late Cardinal Jaime Sin and former President Corazon Aquino led crowds at the Rizal Park estimated at 400,000 to oppose attempts to change the Charter which would have allowed then President Fidel Ramos to run for a second term. Ramos backed off.

In 1999, about 70,000 protesters led by Sin and Aquino held a protest rally in Makati City to oppose Cha-cha under then President Joseph Estrada.

Banners must go

At Tuk, they will be told to fold up their banners because they will then be entering "an environment of prayer," Quirico said in a television interview.

Church officials have said that the Quirino Grandstand would be reserved exclusively for Archbish-

Front page 5

op Rosales and others who would concelebrate the Mass.

Other guests, including Bro. Mike, Bro. Eddie, and political figures, will be asked to stay with the rest of the crowd fronting the grandstand.

Church leaders had called the rally to protest administration moves to tinker with the Constitution and set up a parliamentary government under Mr. Arroyo still in command.

Following Malacañang's and the House's retreat on the Con-ass issue, CBCP president and Jaro Archbishop Angel Lagdameo appeared to give the rally a new task. He said the gathering would be a "prayer rally of thanksgiving."

Palace heard people

"We thank God because our leaders heard the voice of the people," he said. "We hope and pray both leaders and people will persevere in their common conviction for harmony."

CBCP officials said the rally would serve to remind the people to keep watchful and vigilant over important issues confronting the country. Hence, the rally's theme—Watch and Pray.

Legislators stirred a pitter for its briefly.

"People do not—should not—pray against each other; they must pray for each other," he said in a message posted in his own blog site (ellphadlemen.blogspot.com).

Prayers answered

Lagdameo's message struck a more conciliatory note than some other bishops critical and outspoken of the Arroyo administration.

"God does not have enemies, only children. Whatever may be the people's place in the political and social spectrum, they are always all citizens of the same country and children of God," the CBCP president added.

Lagdameo said the clergy and the ordinary faithful had been praying since the beginning of the political crisis sparked by administration's Cha-cha drive. He said the people's prayers for the abandonment of Cha-cha was granted even before today's rally.

"Now God answered our prayers even before we directly addressed it to Him," he said. "God has heard our unarticulated prayers. He hears the Philippines. He has answered our silent-but-loud attention into desire, a moment of grace."

16,000 cops

The Philippine National Police has tripled to 16,000 the number of cops that would secure the rally. The Armed Forces of the Philippines has also readied some 3,000 troops to reinforce the police.

PNP spokesperson Chief Supt. Samuel Pagdilao said the police-men under Task Force Manila Shield would be deployed around Luneta. Checkpoints have also been put up in strategic areas, including the North and South Luzon Expressways.

"We have to double up to ensure that no explosive materials or firearms are brought in," Pagdilao said.

AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr. said he would muster almost 2,000 other troops at the Camp Aguinaldo headquarters where the soldiers will hold their own Mass.

"We will pray for the safety of our soldiers," Esperon said.

The AFP National Capital Region Command has placed on stand by another seven companies composed of at least 800 troops.

Esperon separated his warning about possible takeovers.

"We are tracking down a particular group that might try to create trouble. But I cannot discuss this now since this is purely an operational matter," he said.

Go, GMA

One top Catholic prelate attending today's gathering thinks it is time for the national leadership "to go."

Lingayen-Dagupan Archbishop Oscar Cruz said he hoped the popular uproar against Cha-cha would be, for the national leadership, a "kind of painful lesson that it is neither truly master to govern nor really capable of good governance."

Another planet

"The logical conclusion is that one or it appears that the time has come for the national leadership to go, to succeed the office, to move somewhere, to leave everything behind," Cruz said in a statement posted in his blog site (cbcpmegapost.com).

Cruz also said he is able to sense the views some organizers have hummed all political speeches in.

The archbishop claims that the national leadership "continues to be accused of lying, cheating and stealing…"

He also said: "There must be another planet where those pursued and shunned proponents of Cha-cha come from to preach that national aboulishes, progress and development are necessarily connected with a parliamentary form of government." With Dona Z. Pazzibugan and Phil Bacsarpa

Don't force students to rally, Gonzalez tells priests

By Armand N. Nocum

JUSTICE SECRETARY RAUL Gonzalez yesterday accused some priests of forcing students in Catholic schools to attend today's rally at the Quirino Grandstand.

Gonzalez also hit the Catholic Church hierarchy for allegedly wanting to set the government's political "agenda" and engaging in acts of destabilization.

"It is every time that there are certain Church people deeply involved in destabilization," he said. "The church in Quezon City is being guarded by [evangelist soldiers]. They are telling lots of money there wanted to overcome rush."

He did not identify the "Church people" or the church.

In an interview with the Inquirer, Gonzalez also said the Church had even installed an escape door rear there through a subdivision to ensure that those planning Mr. Arroyo's ouster would not be caught.

Gonzalez said that he had received reports that students had been "influenced" to join today's rally.

"There will be lots of people because they favor the children and students to go there. Anyone, UST, La Salle and other [all schools are being strongly] influenced by the priests and the school administrators," he said.

"I already had it investigated," he said.

Gonzalez said he had learned from leaders in the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines that today's rally did not have the "consent" of the whole CBCP hierarchy.

Luneta traffic rerouted

THE MANILA POLICE DISTRICT has drawn up a traffic rerouting plan to minimize traffic during today's rally at the Quirino Grandstand.

All vehicles coming from the northern part of Manila/Ver Zone will have to turn left to G. Serrano to their point of destination.

On the other hand, all vehicles coming from the southern part of Manila intending to use the stretch of Roxas Boulevard will have to turn right on Pres. Jose Quirino Avenue to their point of destination.

All vehicles coming from Macdelbar, Roxas and Quezon bridges will have to take their terminus to their point of destination.

All light vehicles coming both from north and south of Manila will have to take Taft Avenue.

Closed to vehicular traffic will be the stretch of Roxas Boulevard, north and southbound, from Arnaiz Ave. (Pasay boundary) to Pres. Quirino Avenue, the stretch of T.M. Kalaw (westbound) from Ma. Orosa to Roxas Boulevard, and the stretch of P. Burgos (northbound) from Mt. Orosa to Roxas Boulevard.

Designated parking areas will be the stretch of Bonifacio Drive from P. Burgos to Andy Circle (southbound), the stretch of T.M. Kalaw from Ma. Orosa to Roxas Boulevard, and the stretch of P. Burgos from Katigbak to Ma. Orosa (one and one-half lane). Tina G. Santos

Solon, bodyguard shot dead at Mt. Carmel Church after wedding

Front page 6

Drive, several streets away from the church.

Over ABC News, Bersamin's driver Allan Inocadas, also a policeman, said he engaged the gunmen in a shootout. Inocadas was hit in the leg.

Police investigators said that a 13-year-old watch-your-car boy was also hit in the crossfire, and that the boy was taken to an undisclosed hospital.

Janice Lucas Bersamin, the lawmaker's younger brother, described a TV crew's request for comment.

Bersamin's murder came more than a month after a relative, then provincial board member Simon Bersamin, 68, was shot dead in the capital Baguio.

James Bersamin was the third ranking official from Abra to be assassinated this year. In May Mayor Mar Yuard Bentor was killed in the same place on Jan. 15.

Family members said the lawmaker had just stood in a sponsor in the marriage of his sister Pia, daughter of Justice Bersamin, to Niño Buenaventura and was on his way to the reception when he was gunned down at around 3:20 p.m.

"It was the emotional and re-

IS NOTHING SACRED ANYMORE? Scene of crime investigators at the Mt. Carmel Church compound in New Manila check out Abra Rep. Luis Bersamin Jr. (left) and his bodyguard SPO1 Adolfo Ortega sprawled on the ground after being gunned down in cold blood. The congressman stood as sponsor at his sister's wedding

2004 as representative of the lone district of Abra. Before then, he served as vice governor of the province from 1998 to 2001 and mayor of his native Bangued from 1987 to 1998.

Despite the comments, Speaker Jose de Venecia said: "I strongly condemn the attack and ask police authorities to conduct an immediate and thorough investigation, and identify the perpetrators and the motive behind the killing."

Presidential political adviser Gabriel Claudio also deplored the attack. He said he was "shocked and outraged by this gruesome, cold-blooded murder."

"Government will leave no stone unturned to bring the guilt but perpetrators to justice," Claudio said in a statement.

Philippine National Police Director General Oscar Calderon ordered the creation of a task force to go after the killers.

Bersamin had served as vice chair of the Senate committee on dangerous drugs and on trade and industry.

He was a member of the committees on agriculture and food, on appropriations, and on cooperatives, among others.

Prior to his stint in the public service, Bersamin worked at Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. from 1968 to 1977 and Allied Bank from 1977 to 1986.

He was a Rotary Club member since 1985.

He held degree in psychology and commerce from the University of Santo Tomas and the University of the East, respectively. He also took a postgraduate course at the Ateneo (Business School. With reports from AP and Lawrence de Guzman, Inquirer Research

DA assures lots of chicken for Christmas

By Norman Bordadora

THERE WILL BE AN AMPLE SUPPLY of chicken at affordable prices over the holidays, Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap assured consumers yesterday.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) has approved the importation of almost three million kilos of chicken—a Filipino Christmas dinner staple—from the United States and Canada.

"The cold storage warehouses contain enough stocks and are regularly replenished. The DA will be regularly monitoring the situation to see that the supply and prices of chicken in the retail markets is normal. The supply and prices of chicken are more stable this holiday season," Yap said at the weekly Kapihan sa Sulo news forum in Quezon City.

Yap said the Philippine Association of Broiler Integrators Inc. and the United Broilers Raisers Association have expressed that their respective control systems in the distribution of breeder and broiler chicken will be able to maintain the supply and prices of chicken.

The importation was meant to make up for chicken supply losses attributed to the bird flu outbreak in Luzon and damaged poultry stock equivalent to 2,000 metric tons.

Records of the Bureau of Agricultural Statistics showed that the prices of frozen chicken in Metro Manila supermarkets were now as low as P90 per kilo, and P130 at the wet markets.

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Music offers ray of hope to Quiapo's *sampaguita* vendors

QUIAPO Church officials are also forming a mandala, whose members include children who live on the streets or widows to for a living.

By Tina G. Santos

DURING THE HOLIDAYS, MANY STREET children and *sampaguita* vendors around the Minor Basilica of the Black Nazarene (Quiapo Church) go around singing Christmas carols in the busy neighborhood.

But this year, some of them decided they would spend Christmas closer by singing at the traditional Misa de Gallo instead.

Joy Ann Mejia, 14, has an angelic voice that delights churchgoers when she sings during weekend Masses and celebrations at the church.

"I sing at the church when I'm not selling flowers or when I don't have classes," Mejia, a second year student at the Claro M. Recto High School, said in Filipino.

"I feel blessed (when) I sing for Him," she added. "I notice that many people buy my *sampaguita* (the Mass when) I join the choir."

For the past several months, Mejia, along with three other *sampaguita* vendors her age, have sung with the Blessed Sturgeon de Castello (BSDC) choir, one of seven Sessions of the Seniors Under Jesus Nazarenus in the church.

The BSDC choir is an all-male group of ten- and very-young men and beggars.

"We usually don't see girls and boys in a choir. But these girls said they would really love to sing during Mass. So sometimes, we call the group 'BSDC and the Children's Choir'," said Bro. Eddie Egera, choir coordinator.

Feeding program beneficiaries

He said choir members were among the beneficiaries of the parish's feeding program that distributes free Ligaw three times a day every day to street people, mamalimi job seekers, and two poor Quiapo residents.

Occupied by a monsieur who presented him a job in the city, Danny Hubang, 30, a native of Pampanga, wandered for several days in the area. "I was hungry. I had no money and I had nowhere to go so I asked Brother Eddie for help. He offered me work as a parish volunteer and started early as a member of the choir," he said.

Named after a blind hunchback Italian girl who keeps company with beggars and outcasts after being abandoned by her parents, the Blessed Sturgeon de Castello choir was formed two years ago by three newly-installed parish priest Msgr. Josefino "Pepe" Ramirez.

Egera said some members of the choir came from a group of the same name that Ramirez founded in San Lorenzo Ruiz in Binondo where he served before moving to Quiapo.

"Members of the first BSDC choir were beggars and street people that Monsignor Ramirez used to feed when he was parish priest of Binondo. He's just continuing what he has been doing for several years," Egera said.

Empowering the poor

Empowerment of the poor was the parish's overriding concern, he added. "Perhaps because of the growing congestion in his parish, and because most of his parishioners are among the less privileged, Monsignor Ramirez has fostered an unending to choir needs," Egera said.

Cleofe Tapacio, 13, the choir's youngest member, said joining the choir was the best thing that happened to him.

Apart from the allowance of P150 a week that each member gets, Tapacio says also able to go back to school with the help of the parish. The sixth in a brood of 10, he said his parents could no longer support him because of poverty.

Every morning on weekends, Tapacio sings during the Mass and, in the afternoon, sells *sampaguita* in front of the church to help his family.

The best benefit of being a choir member, however, has been the improvement in their self-esteem. "After a while, you could see how their grooming has changed. The way they carry themselves now is also different...how they walk, how they dress. They now exude confidence," Egera observed, saying he and other parish workers also teach choir members good grooming and proper manners.

Minor problem

Though there was a minor problem with discipline at first, that was soon resolved, Egera added. "I believe all our hard work has paid off because our group is usually cited when we perform," he proudly said.

Apart from the usual Misa songs, the choir is often applauded when it sings "Gatong ng Buhay," a song about rising from poverty.

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Taking a gamble on poor students, UP shows off winners' harvest

By DJ Yap

THERE, PEDRO AND OF THERE, words eyed Lads, and leaves from the barrios with little money in their pockets and virtually no prospects for the future.

That is, until the University of the Philippines in Diliman, Quezon City took a gamble on them, and gave them free access to top-caliber education through the Expressway Democratization Scholarship (EDS) Program.

Today, three decades later, many of them are stars in their own, discrete stories—as professors, lawyers, engineers, doctors, architects and businessmen.

Living proof

In the light of a controversial proposal to raise UP's tuition threefold, many graduates of the EDS program are living proof that it takes only a little generosity to save poor but smart students from a life of poverty.

Victor Isidro, the son of a low-salaried postmaster and schoolteacher, is the youngest in a brood of nine.

He became one of the first beneficiaries of EDS, which the university implemented from 1977 to 1981 to help correct an imbalance in students' enrollment that favored the more affluent.

The university shouldered the full cost of Isidro's studies in geodetic engineering, including tuition, board and lodging at university dormitories, books, transportation, and learning assistance materials.

Back then, the gap between rich and poor students at UP was just modestly marked, recalled Isidro.

"We were 'proud' and everybody knew it. Some our having and animals in the six-inch-Governors we all lugged around because we thought we were required to, since UP gave them to us," he said.

Despite sarcastic remarks thrown their way, barbs and hit jokes EDS were undeterred. They attended classes with pride in being part of the country's premier state university.

In a sense, the "proud" label brought the EDS grantees closer, he said. "We banded together and went to classes together. Our banding was special because some of us felt we were outmanned."

This special bond was revived recently when some grantees formed an Internet group seeking to reconnect all former EDS students.

In less than a year, more than a hundred had joined the e-group, through which they updated each other on their lives since leaving Diliman.

Success stories

The reference too they got gave them now reason to feel proud. The group, in a prior account, gave a sampling of EDS success stories:

"An accountancy graduate is now the senior vice president of the finance department of Meralco Philippines, while an economics alumna is director for economic affairs at the Australian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Canberra.

"An industrial engineering (IE) alumna is now a manager at Pfizer in New York, while another IE alumnus is now employed in the United Nations System as marketing chanel and his investment banking experience in the Philippines and overseas.

"An EDS alumnus joined recently the United States Agency for International Development after years of managerial experience in the pharmaceuticals industry. The Asian Development Bank also has an EDS alumnus in its ranks.

Today, members of EDS will meet again after almost 30 years for the "Kain ng Pananghalian" or Pananghalian" to-boost their reunion. The event will be held 6 p.m. to 11 p.m. at the Bahay ng Alumni of UP Diliman.

"We do not expect that all the EDS or as grantees have inspirational stories to tell," members of the e-group said in a statement.

Multiplier effects

"However, based on the stories in the e-group, it appears that the university had made its bet," they added. "The experimental program benefited not just EDS individuals. Truly, the benefits had multiplier effects in that many of us were able to send siblings and other relatives to college."

Instead of [illegible] being first line (from before) the [illegible] line, we, and our siblings, are now raising families that have better chances in the future," they said.

In for Isidro, he is now married and the father of a teenage girl. After graduation, he pursued a Master's degree in public management at the Development Academy of the Philippines.

He now teaches at the graduate school of the National College of Business and Arts and the University of Makati.

What might have been

Isidro shudders when he thinks what his life would have been like were it not for the opportunity the university gave him.

"In our talks, some of us were saying we might be on the streets begging, at very struggling people, if not for EDS. Personally, I think I would have survived, but life would have been harder," he said.

Isidro said he and his fellow EDS alumni intend to offer a scholarship for an indigent student, especially someone from the province.

"We're in the process of raising funds, but we hope to sponsor at least one student next school year," he said. It was their small way of paying back what they owed UP "Most of us feel so about now that we gave something back to the university," Isidro said.

VICTOR Isidro (top row, second from right) and other beneficiaries of the Expressway Democratization Scholarship program at the University of the Philippines want to put up a scholarship for poor students as their way of repaying the university.

FORMER magicians and beggars make up the all-male Blessed Margaret de Castello choir

Music offers . . .

Pronunciation

"They seem to sing a from the heart, perhaps because they are so late to the meaning of the song," Igura added. Most often than not, churchgoers become teary-eyed when they hear the choir sing it."

To date, the BMCC choir sings at the 10 a.m. Mass everyday. It has also performed in the province, or when ever Bantoto is constructing Mass.

Igura said the parish was now organizing a roadside fair would eventually accompany the choirs during Misyon.

Project coordinator Soel Bating said the ramblin would be composed of young tambayanin vendors in front of the church.

"Street children, including flower vendors and those living around the church's immediate community, will be trained to be professional ramblin players so they can be hired to play in special occasions like fiestas to earn extra income," Bating said.

He he said the ramblin was preparing for a major event next month, the Black Nazarene's fourth centenary.

"It will be a grand celebration. It will be exactly 400 years since the image was brought to the Philippines from Mexico by the first group of Augustinian Recollect missionaries that landed in Manila," Bating said.

The ramblin will be composed of 22 children aged 12 to 14 years, including eight tambayanin vendors.

Bhejo, who is also a member of the group, said she was looking forward to joining the fundraiser.

"It's a new experience for me and I'm very excited," Mejia said.

But before the big event, she said the rest of the choir are gearing up for more activities this Christmas, including singing in the Simbang Gabi and caroling in the community and neighboring parishes.

Traffic chief axed

By Tina G. Santos

MANILA MAYOR [illegible] to Atienza has dismissed the Manila Police District's Traffic Enforcement Office chief over the proliferation of illegal terminals and his failure to implement order to the city's streets.

Supt. Roberto dela Rosa was replaced by Supt. Elmer Jamias, who officiated by rank were the pass Friday.

"I've been receiving mounting complaints and I've repeatedly reminded him (dela Rosa) of them," Atienza said. "I've given him full control of the civilian traffic aides. I've been very supportive and understanding of him but he seems to be helpless."

The mayor said he has instructed Jamias to clean up traffic, particularly in busy areas during the Christmas season.

Last month, Atienza dismissed the traffic enforcers who were under Dela Rosa's supervision after they were found remiss in their duties.

"We don't need them, they were not doing their job properly," Atienza earlier said, explaining that he had to take action because of numerous complaints from motorists.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

GLOBAL Pinoy

Edited by Gerry Lirio

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This section is dedicated to Filipinos overseas toiling on land and at sea, in factories, in construction sites and in the homes of the world, and whomever work can be contracted to secure a better life for their families. These are their stories.

VALENCIA and President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo with other Filipino achievers during the president's visit to the United Kingdom in October.

She's a Filipino Cinderella, all right; but her success didn't happen by the stroke of a magic wand

THE FAIRCHILDS Group of Companies standing at No. 10 Hogarth Road Earl's Court in London, serving the Filipino community in the United Kingdom

Maid in London returns home a multimillionaire

CONSUELO VALENCIA: What an inspiring story

By Brenan Cana

COME CHRISTMAS TIME, FILIPINO workers around the world are likely packing goodies to box.

Back home, the air is filled with the scents of "homesick" boxes, soaps, chocolates and the whiff of Americana deliciously trapped inside what have come to be known as balikbayan boxes.

The 59-year old Consuelo Valencia, the scourge of the balikbayan box inspired her to put up the Fairchilds Group of Companies 18 years ago. The business venture eventually earned her millions.

No fairy tale

But the success of Manang Consuelo, as she's fondly called by friends was hardly a fairy tale at the start. She took courage to fly to London in May 1977 to work as a domestic helper.

She left her two young sons in the care of her husband who himself was trying to make ends meet.

Armed with the ambition and determination to give her family the best that life can offer, she rose from scrubbing floors to being one of most the most successful Filipino businesswomen in the United Kingdom.

"It was a matter of survival and sacrifice for me and my family," says Manang Consuelo, who arrived Friday night to spend the holidays with her family.

But the sacrifices eventually paid off. Investor.ph newspaper in the UK had carried her story on how a cleaner became a millionaire in 14 years.

How it all began

Her eventual rise to fortune started in 1986 when after nine years of scrubbing floors in London, Manang Consuelo was offered a job with a freight shipping firm.

"At that time, nobody was doing business with the Philippines," she says. "But I realized there were many people here (UK) who wanted to send parcels to their families."

When the owner of the firm retired, the business was handed down to her. Through her excellent PR skills and her determination to succeed, she managed to bring the company on top of the heap with an ever-growing list of customers.

The company now collects boxes and 7 sheets from individual customers across the United Kingdom. Manang Consuelo says these weekly shipment averages 40 container dropped desk-to-door delivery to the Philippines. This time of the year is the busiest, she says, since the movement of the balikbayan boxes is at its peak.

But in 1990, Manang Consuelo ventured into a door to door cash delivery service through the Fairchilds Remittances.

"With Filipinos in the UK sending money once or twice a month to support their families back home, this is a perfect venture," she says. By offering a reliable face-to-face speedy delivery, high exchange rates and low remittance fees, Manang Consuelo gives the banks a run for their money.

Not content with the success of the remittance and freight business, in 1999 she also embarked on travel services, phone card dealership, real estate, recruitment and publishing forces—all of which she never imagined she could ever have.

In just 10 years, the Irish Coast-based freight forwarder company expanded into a wide range of business ventures now known as Fairchilds Group of Companies, the biggest business of its kind servicing mainly the Filipino community in the UK.

Now its managing director, Manang Consuelo supervises the freight company and its subsidiaries including the widely known travel agency that mainly deals with flights to Asia, Singapore and the Philippines. She now also owns four house-building in London.

Tatak Filipino

She also launched Tatak Filipino in October 2002, a mini-supermarket specializing in food stuff imported from the Philippines and the Far East.

Once serving a single household doing household chores, Manang Consuelo, through her chain of businesses, now serves the whole Filipino community in UK.

But serving her fellow Filipinos doesn't end there. She has donated three libraries here in the Philippines, a Catholic chapel and chaperone in Iloilo—her way of giving back, she says.

With an outstanding profile as a business tycoon who rose from poverty, Manang Consuelo has earned for herself accolades here and abroad, recognizing her dedication to work.

She placed 11th in the 100 BIG Women of Achievement in UK in 2004 and also won the Woman into Business Awards sponsored by the Bank of Scotland in February 2003.

To date, the rags-to-riches story of Manang Consuelo has attracted various film producers and TV networks. In the UK, a known writer has offered to write about her life while the British Broadcasting Company will soon shoot a documentary film about her.

Manang Consuelo arrived Friday night straight from London to receive her award as one of the outstanding Overseas Filipino Entrepreneurs (OFEs) sponsored by the Philippine Center for Entrepreneurship (PCE). The award was given yesterday by President Arroyo and Presidential Consultant for Entrepreneurship Jose Concepcion III at the "Go Negosyo Para sa mga OFWs at Kabikbayan Fair" at Market Market Trade Halls A & B in Taguig City.

Go Negosyo awardee

The "Go Negosyo" para sa mga OFWs at Balikbayans is part of the continuing Go Negosyo campaign of PCE, encouraging the further development of entrepreneurship in the country. It also aims to complement the happiness of OFWs getting reunited with their families by exposing them to business opportunities.

The 59-year old is now a multimillionaire. Indeed, 30 years after leaving her family to become a maid in London, Manang Consuelo is literally made.

VALENCIA receives the Women Into Business Award at the House of Commons in United Kingdom in 2003 from the officials of the Bank of Scotland Business Banking and the British Franchise Association. From left, Simon Wise, deputy director of British Franchise Association, Rt. Hon Lord Howe of Aberavon, Patron; and Ray Macfarlane, head of Group Community Relations Bank of Scotland.

The WORLD

Lilac Lorenzo B. Sucio

Tensions stir fear of Palestinian civil war

RAMALLAH, WEST BANK—PALESTINIAN President Mahmoud Abbas may threaten to call early elections on Saturday in a much anticipated speech after violence between his Fatah group and the ruling Hamas stirred fears of civil war.

Internal tensions are at their worst in a decade after months of talks between the Hamas islamists and Fatah on forging a unity government floundered, clashing Palestinians began (but an end to crippling Western sanctions could be in sight.

Aides to Abbas said they expected him to say in his speech that he would allow new snap elections if forming a unity government fails to succeed, and that if that failed, he would call fresh parliamentary and presidential elections.

"In my opinion, Abbas is faced with a continuation of the bullets or going back to the ballots. I think Abbas has chosen the ballots," Intelligence, senior Abbas aide, said.

Abbas's threats resemble 22 Hamas supporters in Ramallah on Friday when they fired on protesters. Gunbattles between the factions also erupted in Gaza.

There were no early reports of clashes on Saturday.

Hamas, which organized Bush to win parliamentary elections in January, has said it would expand any call for fresh elections as a coup. Abbas was viewed separately in early 2005 in a presidential poll that Hamas did not contest.

Khalil al-Hayya, the head of Hamas's faction in parliament, said on Friday that Abassa would not agree to an early election as a referendum on the issue. He did not say what action Hamas would take if Abbas called new elections.

The Palestinian basic law, which acts as a constitution, has no provision for calling elections.

Fatah officials say Abbas can decide by issuing a presidential decree. Hamas contends it would be illegal.

Some analysts have questioned whether Abbas would make a bold announcement of this sort at a time when emotions are running at fever pitch.

"He will threaten to hold early elections or a referendum but I do not think he is mentally," political analyst Hasem Abdel-Salam said. "He has opened a can of worms in the daily Palestine Times.

Abbas has found as decisive steps such as sacking the powerless, but has so far acted with caution.

Hamas has led the government since March but has largely been unable to govern because of the Western sanctions and Israel's withholding of tax-fund transfers.

The sanctions were imposed because of Hamas's refusal to recognize Israel and renounce violence.

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told Reuters she would not. Congress for now of millions of dollars to strengthen Abbas's security forces. Washington wants to ensure Abbas emerges victorious in any power struggle with Hamas.

Israel and the United States regard Hamas as a terrorist group and would be happy to see the Hamas government fall. Reuters

UK police say they're closing in on strangler

IPSWICH, ENGLAND—POLICE in Britain hunting a killer dubbed the "Suffolk Strangler" after the deaths of five prostitutes are focusing on five key suspects, one of the region is said Saturday.

Detectives want to talk to a taxi driver, a businessman and a man with a liking for outdoor sex, all of whom were clients of Tania Nicol, one of the dead prostitutes, the Sun newspaper reported.

They are increasingly confident that they are closing in on the killer terrorizing the sleepy town of Ipswich, in eastern England, after the discovery of five bodies in ten days, according to the Times.

The victims have been confirmed as Nicol, 19; Gemma Adams, 25; Annett Nicholas, 24; Paula Clennell, also 26; and Anneree Nicholls, 29.

Cause of death has only been established in one of the cases.—Clennell died of "compression to the neck," while different was strangled.

The focus of the inquiry has "narrowed significantly," the Times's source said.

Police think it is "very significant" that none of the women's bodies show signs of a struggle and that none was sexually assaulted before being killed, the Times reported.

Detective Chief Superintendent Stewart Gull, heading the probe, said Friday that his team was making "good progress." He said police were "looking at a number of interesting people" but admitted they did not have any suspects.

Ipswich's streets were again virtually deserted Friday night, despite Christmas parties being in full swing elsewhere in the UK, as the murder town lives in fear of more deaths.

Police and local drug workers are passing prostitutes to stay off the streets with money being provided by an unidentified charity.

Many have compared the killings to those committed by the notorious Jack the Ripper, who murdered five near London's prostitutes in 1888, and Yorkshire Ripper Peter Sutcliffe, responsible for the deaths of 13 women between 1975 and 1980. AFP

A PICTURE, showing the five prostitutes killed in Suffolk in the last two weeks, is displayed on a candlelit prayer service on Dec. 14, held for Gemma Adams, Tania Nicol, Anneli Alderton, Paula Clennell and Annette Nicholls, at St. Peter's church, in Copdock. More than 400 people gathered in light candles in memory of the women. AP

US senator's progress 'encouraging' after surgery

WASHINGTON—A DEMOCRATIC senator whose sudden brain hemorrhage jeopardized his party's majority in the Senate is showing encouraging signs of recovery, his doctors said. He is in remote, hospitalized until post-surgery swelling in his brain goes down.

Senator Tim Johnson remained in critical but stable condition Friday, just short of three weeks before the new Senate is to convene with his party holding control by a single vote. The South Dakota Democrat suffered a brain hemorrhage Wednesday.

The timing of his return is uncertain, but Democrats could still be in control of the Senate if his recovery period extends into the new session.

If Johnson were to leave office, South Dakota's Republican Governor Mike Rounds would be charged with appointing a replacement to serve out the remainder of his term in 2008. A Republican appointee would create a 50-50 tie and effectively allow the Republicans to retain Senate control because the vice president—Dick Cheney—casts the tie-breaking vote.

Johnson's surgery has been described as successful, relieving pressure on the 59-year-old senator's brain and stopping the bleeding.

"Considering his initial presentation, his progress is encouraging," Dr. Anthony Caputy, chair of the George Washington University Hospital department of neurosurgery, said.

As a precaution, physicians placed a removable, MRI-compatible filter in Johnson's vena cava, a large vein leading into his heart, to reduce the risk of a blood clot going to his lungs, said Dr. Anthony Tortorese.

The senator was rushed to the hospital at midday Wednesday after becoming disoriented and mumbling during a conference call with reporters. He was diagnosed with arteriovenous malformation, or AVM, a condition that causes arteries and veins to grow abnormally large, become tangled and constrict burst. The condition often appears from birth. AP

WORLDBRIEFS

Nepal parties, rebels charter

KATHMANDU—Nepal's ruling alliance and Maoist rebels on Saturday approved the draft of an interim constitution, a key step to implement their landmark peace deal ending a conflict which has killed thousands, negotiators said. The document, an interim law that paves the way for Maoists to join a coalition parliament and government, was signed by top leaders of the alliance including Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala and the Maoist chief leader Prachanda. "This is yet another major achievement for the establishment of peace in Nepal," said Dinesh Bhattarai, Koirala's senior leader of the Communist UML party, the second biggest group in the seven-party coalition. "The interim constitution will carry out the wish of the people of state and the long-held hopes are right in our country," Bhattarai told reporters. There were no immediate comments from the king, who has already lost much of his power. Protesters after he sacked the government in February 2005 launching months of mass street protests against him. Analysts said the beleaguered monarch had no choice but to accept the decision. Reuters

Russian minister discredits Litvinenko

MOSCOW—Alexander Litvinenko, the former agent over the fall in London last month, was not an intelligence agent of much power, a minister was listed from Russia's secretary agency where it was a unity, now president Vladimir Putin. Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov said Litvinenko's views, regarding death from radiation poisoning in London last month prompted an international police investigation after the former agent accused Putin of his murder, an accusation that Russian officials say was part of a plot by the secret services to say Russian officials in the case, could otherwise never had access to important information. "He was never a spy and never knew anything of any real value to give to any (foreign intelligence) service," Ivanov told foreign correspondents at a dinner here on Friday. Reuters

Lethal injection halted in Calif., Florida

SAN FRANCISCO—Rattled executioners in California and Florida that required more than 30 minutes to kill condemned murderers amended a revolutionary of the lethal injection procedure in both states on Friday. Federal Judge Jeremy Fogel heard California's method of execution unconstitutional, suspending the "triple-combination of lethal drugs" in the state, but U.S. Justice Stevens. The decision follows the state's 2006 moratorium on which guards failed to execute a triple-six time convicted killer Stanley "Tookie" Williams, the former Crips gang leader who gained global publicity after writing anti-gang books. Even on Wednesday's lethal executions failed the execution of swollen into condemned killer Angel Diaz, which reportedly took almost 90 minutes for drugs to flow into his veins, according to his attorney's medical examiner. Death penalty opponents have argued that lethal injection is cruel and unusual punishment banned by the US Constitution, but only such recent instances have given legal and political backbone to their arguments. Reuters

More Japanese teachers depressed

TOKYO—A record number of teachers at Japanese public schools took leave for depression or other mental health problems in the year to March, as Education Ministry survey showed. The figure, at 4,274, was triple what it was 10 years ago and comes as pressure mounts on education authorities to resolve problems such as bullying and excessive stress due to rote learning. Japan awarded a low ranking in a recent OECD survey on motivation and job satisfaction among its teachers, saying it would double to be one quarter problems. A ministry official attributed the survey's findings to teachers suffering from heavier workloads and difficulties to relationships with colleagues and students' parents. Kyodo news agency said. Reuters

US: 'Sex worker' is wrong tag

WASHINGTON—PROSTITUTES ARE USually termed sex workers by governments and social welfare groups to avoid demeaning them but the United States feels the switch unwittingly dignifies syndicates involved in the flesh trade.

The State Department's office combating human trafficking issued a directive Friday in US agencies urging them to avoid using terms "sex worker" or "child sex worker" and even advised governments not to use them.

"Of concern, some use euphemistic words such as 'sex worker' and 'child sex worker' in an effort to avoid a demeaning label such as 'prostitute,'" said John Miller, the office's director.

"However, there are other substitutes such as 'women used in prostitution' or 'sexually exploited children' that are neither pejorative nor gratuitous that condone to women and children at work," said Miller, who retired Friday after campaigning extensively across the globe on issues like human trafficking problem.

During his four years on the job, the lanky former legislator has visited more than 50 countries and met more than 15,000 survivors of what he called "modern-day slavery."

Some 800,000 women, children and men are trafficked across national boundaries each year, most of whom are enslaved in the sex industry, the State Department says.

Miller said language was no important tool in fighting human trafficking.

"In earlier centuries to avoid facing up to the suffering of slaves, words such as 'housekeeper,' 'field hand,' and 'servant' were used.

"Today, words such as 'forced laborer,' 'sex worker,' 'child soldier,' and 'child sex worker' are to conceal," he said.

These words, he said, required scrutiny. AFP

75 dirty Rio cops arrested

RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil—Brazilian federal agents arrested 75 police officers suspects on Friday for links with organized crime in Rio de Janeiro state's highprofile bid to get rid of corrupt cops.

A special federal police unit from the capital, Brasilia, and other cities arrived in Rio to make the arrests jointly with the state police internal investigations department.

In the early hours on Friday they raided a skyscraper on the outskirts of Rio where some of the officers accused of involvement in drug and arms trafficking lived. Many others were arrested in their police stations.

"We have to applaud this operation, it has a great symbolic value. By rubbing so many police amid a message to the force that they are being serious," said Julita Lemgruber, director of the Center for Security and Citizenship Studies at Rio de Janeiro's Candido Mendes University. Reuters

Sunday SPORTS

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WHAT'S INSIDE
Rosales relishes 'winning feeling'/A26

TOYOTA Otis' Marvin Cruz drives past Cebuana Lhuillier's Macky Escalona in yesterday's game.

Moneymen show more reserves

By Jasmine W. Payo

CEBUANA LHUILLIER-PERA Padala banked on the offense of their reserves to snap a three-game slide with a 95-83 triumph against Toyota Otis in the PBL Silver Cup yesterday at the Olivarez College Sports Center.

Emer Ortiz took over the Moneymen's orchestrated team stats to finish with a game-high 20 points.

"When a double-overdose game, we were saving their legs," said coach Leigi Trillo of his reserves, just two days after the Moneymen marched a double-overtime loss to Mail and More, 95-90. "Ortiz came out and just tried to prove a point."

Ortiz and Erlick dela Cuesta, who teamed to 15 points and eight assists, came off the bench to set the tone in the first half.

"Finally we had a good start," noted Trillo. "We shot focused on our defense and rebounding."

Cebuana's big men also came through in the second half as Greg Slaton and Ben Bruce finished with a combined 34 markers.

Rechmel Cortez also halted its back-to-back skid with a 72-63 victory over Magnolia in Cavite in the second game.

Reed Juanilla pumped in 16 points for the Pure Blenders, who got a serious pre-game visit from head coach Jorge Gallent.

"After our loss to Otis, instead of practicing we had a ball session and it worked," he said. "In the first five games, there was a lot of expectations. They just didn't meet the way they're supposed to."

Cebuana Lhuillier improved its record to 3-4, while Harbour Centre and Toyota Otis remained up with similar 2-5 marks.

The Moneymen's strong offensive performance entered an impressive 338 percent field goal shooting.

From a 43-38 edge at the break, Slaton and Ortiz took charge in a third-quarter run that opened the margin by 18 points, 74-56.

The scores:

First Game

CEBUANA LHUILLIER-PERA—Ortiz 20, Slaton 16, Dela Cruz 15, Dela Cuesta 12, Escalona 8, Manlu 8, Ho 5, Reyes 2, Soliz 2, Verdez 0, Mendoza 0

TOYOTA OTIS 80—See 19, Alamar 12, Cruz 9, Libunao 6, Lanete 4, Guevarra 4, Balagot 4, Pandiguan 4, Dollosa 0, Tolentino 0, Jose 0, Quimbo 0, Nifas 0.

Quarters: 20-14, 43-38, 74-62, 95-83

Second Game

MAGNOLIA CLASSIC 72—Acosta 18, Vergara 11, Arellano 9, Raymundo 9, Bautista 6, Cruz 4, Bonoy 4, Suarez 3, Cunting 2, Abuna 2, Capati 2, Dalupan 2.

RECHMEL 63—Adjarod 11, Dizon 11, Otan 7, Asistores 7, Fernbel 6, Custodio 6, Villanueva 4, Abreo 4, Gonzalvo 2, Bocalbos 0, Aguinaldo 0.

Quarters: 22-13, 32-31, 58-48, 72-63

WHAT'S INSIDE
Wizards zap Heat /A28

Rosales relishes 'winning feeling' as Asia moves up

By Joey Arcena

SINGAPORE—IT'S BEEN QUITE A while and if only for a moment, Jennifer Rosales was able to savor that "winning feeling" she's been looking for all year.

"It certainly stirs it bad," Rosales told the Inquirer after working out a solid victory with Taiwanese Candy Jiang in the best-balls yesterday which helped Team Asia surge to a 7.5 lead over the International side in the Lexus Cup at the Tanah Merah Country Club course here.

When everyday in her 2006 campaign became a frustrating day for the fashion icon of the LPGA Tour, there was reason for a little joy as she and Jiang beat Brittany Lincicome and Wendy Ward, 2&1.

Her one-up update, exchanging high fives with captain Grace Park and her team mates as soon as the day was over and gladly signed autographs for fans.

The Lexus Cup might just trigger something positive for Rosales who needs every bit of a confidence boost or other but turned his rush homeward to a bustling arrive and a swing change that seems to be taking way long to bear fruit.

"I've come to accept that it's going to be a long process and I know's going to be a lot of frustrations along the way," said Rosales, who didn't even make it to the Top 100 of the LPGA Money Club entering here.

Her saving rounds/memories takes a crucial test today when she goes up against American Sheri Steinhauer, the reigning British Women's Open champion, in one of the 12 singles matches capping this Ryder Cup-style competition among the best female players in the world.

With the International's in a completely different situation (they led 6-4 on Day 2 on the way to a 10-6 victory last year), their captain Aranka Szemerkenyi said: "We have to make up some ground tomorrow and the score is 6 can still be better for us. I have much confidence."

Szemerkenyi paired with Natalie Gulbis in a classic one of only two wins her team earned, the other provided by Paula Creamer and Suzy Pettersen-sadik.

Seven Won Lee and Se Ri Pak, Sakura Yokomine and Young Kim and Grace Park and Hee Won Han also banked out victories for the Korean-Ladies/Asian team.

Each member of the winning team will receive $50,000 while the losing side will get $30,000 per player.

JENNY Rosales: Swing change taking too long to bear fruit. PHOTO BY AFP

CDO readies welcome for boxer Payla

By Sabre L. Lagumbay, Correspondent

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY—A HOME welcome awaits boxer Lauren gold medalist Mark Payla when he returns home from his record-set stint in Doha, Qatar.

Captain Jo Oro City Mayor Vicente Emano and his council have passed a resolution citing Payla's outstanding achievements following his impressive win over Thailand's Somjit Jongjohor.

Emano has called Payla's feat as a "source of hope and inspiration for amateur boxers for Cagayan De Oro and Misamis Oriental," even as Governor Oscar Moreno also said Payla is viewed be honored along with Gretchen Ho-Ho, Jessica Sabdullah.

Payla is a product of the city's summer program, and we are very proud of his feat," said Cath Cagayan's Ate Cabalog, who now heads the newly-opened SAB satellite office in Xavierville.

Payla, who hails from Malaybalay, Opol, Misamis Oriental, is a protege of Regs A-Bale Hotel Gym. The 27 year old Payla is a product of the "Boxing in the Park" program of the city.

Opo Mayor Elmar Bluay is reportedly planning to hold a parade for Payla.

Meanwhile, Michael Payla, Victor's younger brother, made a successful pro debut by stopping Bohol's Romanee Sirig in the third round on Friday evening.

Jaidee ahead by 2; Miñoza climbs to 5th

By Musong R. Castillo

TOP LOCAL HOPE THONGKRAI Jaidee fired a three-under-par 69 yesterday to nail his Volvo Asian Masters golf lead by two over at Filipino Frankie Miñoza moved up to solo fifth spot after a 68, just three strokes off Jaidee's two-day total of 136 on the two-over-rocking Asian Tour event.

Jaidee now has a 205 total, two strokes ahead of countrymate Prayad Marksaeng (207) and Thaworn Wiratchant (TH) and Malaysia's Mardan (66) at the Thai Country Club for 209 tallies.

But it was Miñoza, the former Japanese Tour campaigner, who scrambled to make a move, gaining on Jaidee after shooting a 34 on the backnine built around four birdies.

Miñoza, who shot an eagle-aided 64 in the second round, had two bogeys, a birdie and six pars scoring out before shooting three straight birds from the 13th and getting those back on Nos. 14 and 16.

Angelo Que rose to a share of 19th spot after a 75, his second straight subpar round, for 213, eight shots off but definitely in prime position for a great finish.

Jarin Pagunsan, the best-placed Filipino after Thursday's opening round, stumbled with a second straight 75 and dropped to joint 31st with a 222, still safely out of the running.

Pedro Benemerat and Asian No. 1 Jeev Milkha Singh shot identical 72s to share ninth spot with four others at 210. Five behind the red-hot Jaidee, the former paratrooper who took up the game as a late age but made the quick jump as the Thai No. 1.

Pacquiao turns 28, opens RP amateur boxfest

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—TWO HEAVIEST boxers will close their warm-up today at the opening of the Ben Manny Pacquiao National Amateur Boxing tournament at the Oval Plaza Covered Court here.

Seeing action are young fighters from Mindanao-young Cibi, Bohol, Bicolnd, Eastbourne, Cebu, Mindanao, Davao, Zamboanga Peninsula, Davao Oriental, Davao del Norte, Davao del Sur, Davao City, Davao Occidental

Alcano spearheads RP Super Cup trio

FRESH FROM A STIRRING victory in the iconic World Championships, Ronnie Alcano flies to Chinese Taipei no longer a rookie but the star of a three-man PBA spinoff competing in the 2006 Super Cup for National Championships.

Also carrying the flag for the Philippines are two players from different generations, the legendary Jose Pesina and young hotshot Alex Stapelmann, the 2004 World Pool champion.

The lone country will parade defending championship and former two-time Asian Games champion Yang-Ching-Shun, former World Nine-Ball champion Wu Chia-Ching and Chan Wang-peng, Chang Jung-lin, Lee Kuo-Gang and Fu Che-wei.

Also vying in the three-day event are ex-World 9ball titlist Ralf Souquet and 2000 Challenge of Champion winner Thomas Engert of Germany, World 8-ball IPT runner-up Rodney Morris of the US, 2005 Athlete, tennis World Junior runner-up Hikaru Hayabe of Japan and UBV sensation Ilgi Hasdal will also compete for the big prize.

The 36-year-old lanky Alcano snapped out of the shadows of the country's pool greats when he defeated Souquet, 17-11, in the World 9ball finals form to win the top prize worth $1,00,000.

"I hope to have the same success in the Super Cup so that I can bring more good news for our countrymen this Christmas and New Year," said Alcano, a comedown of the Roger promotions stable of Efren and Venus Pilonelo.

Manhattan took Alcano under his wing at its Manila base the 2005 SMB Asian 9-ball tour Manila leg and 2005 Korean Open. "Before Ronnie joined me, people could already see that he had a future in the sport," said Marlboro. "He just needed to train hard." Marlon Bernardino, contributor

RONNIE ALCANO: Eyeing more glory

Asiad bets lead Pichay Cup entries

THE SECOND SEE PROSPERO PICHAY CUP International Open and Chess Challenge starts today at SM City Marikina as the country's junior Lazaro bets leading the participants.

The Philippines, powered by International Masters Darwin Layla and Ronald Dableo and Arthur Decena, placed eighth behind India, China, Iran, Kazakhstan, Indonesia, Qatar and Bangladesh in the inaugural tournament held in Doha, Qatar last December.

Opening rounds begins at 2 p.m. following National Chess Federation of the Philippines president Prospero Pichay's inspirational remarks and Cheli delano's invocation.

At stake are trophies and cash prizes, with the winners purchasing the first's share of P100,000 in the Open division and P20,000 in the Challenger category.

The top five male players and top three women finishers in the tournament will also earn the right to represent the country in the Asian Schools to be held in Vietnam on Jan. 10-19, 2007.

Tournament director Cesar Caturla said the participants can gain enough norms—GM, IM and FM—during the event.

Also expected to join are Grandmasters Mark Paragua, and Nelson Mariano, IM Mickey So, IM Oliver Dimakiling, Richard Bitoon, Mikhlanee Buntz, Two Rasida, Oliver Barbosa, Rolando Tedes, Jobachel Gomez, Jayson Gonzales, Chito Garma, International females IM Ronald Bancod, Jayson Sua, Arlene Pura and Mirabeau Maga and female players Sherdie Joy Lomibao, Beverly Mendoza, Cristine Jean Marasigan, Lovelyl Catane, Sherdila Cay and Catherine Bueno.

Paragua, the country's highest rated player said he wants to make up for his disappointing stint in the Asiad.

Grandmasters Eugene Torre and Jaoy Antonio bagged all. Torre cited his busy schedule while Antonio said he's still suffering from recent ill. MM Mariton Bernardino

GRAND PRIX: The United States' Kara Anne-an'quinn Baldwin perform their pairs short program at the figure skating ISU Grand Prix final in St. Petersburg, Friday. AFP

Beermen want to pour it all vs Phone Pals

By Jane Navarro

REPEATING THE SAME WINning act over Welcoat could be detrimental to the cause of San Miguel Beer.

That's why SMB coach Ong Boyet wants none of it when his Beermen collide with the Talk 'N Text Phone Pals today in the 8th, 9th Texas PBA Philippine Cup at the Araneta Coliseum.

"We wanted to outscore our energy to Talk 'N Text. As a result, we became complacent," said Boyet.

Fighting for survival, the Beermen came close in bringing down the last unwinking Beermen before Jimmy Gough scored but in the second half and saved the night for Boyet.

"If we play like this against a tough team like Talk 'N Text, we don't stand a chance," said Boyet, after the Beermen chalked up wily No. 11, their 10th overnight, at the expense of the Energy.

Another victory will assure the Brewmen (11-3) of a playoff for the No. 2 spot, one of two outright seats in the first of seven semifinals.

The Phone Pals, on the other hand, are aiming to dislodge a crown in the upper bracket of the standings to assure an automatic berth in the quarterfinals.

At 8-3, the Phone Pals will tie the Sta. Lucia Realtors (10-3) at 10th with a triumph over the Beermen.

The top two seeds after the classification round will advance to the semifinals while teams ranked third to fifth automatic quarterfinal berths.

Occupying the third and fourth spots are Red Bull and Purefoods, which take on each other in the other game. Both teams have 10-6 records.

"We just have our eyes focused in the last two games," said Purefoods coach Ryan Gregorio, whose Giants are riding on a three-game win streak.

"We're shooting the ball well and we're in a good position to make the semifinals," he added.

The defending champion Giants have advanced to the semifinals outright for the past two conferences, including bagging the Philippine Cup crown last conference.

STANDINGS	W	L
Coca-Cola	12	4
Talk 'N Text	11	5
Red Bull	10	6
Purefoods	10	6
Welcoat	10	7
Talk	9	7
Air21	7	10
Alaska	6	10
Coca-Cola	4	12
Welcoat	3	14

TODAY'S TODAY
Alaska vs Welcoat
4:30 p.m.—SMB vs TNT
8:00 p.m.—Purefoods vs Red Bull

Spring-Tagaytay, Ozamiz near NBC showdown

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY—STEPHEN Spurgeon edged North Cotabato in overtime, 98-96, and back-to-back champion Ozamiz City, 91-78, Friday to both closer to a title showdown in the 2006 Spring Cooking Oil-MC National Cup basketball tournament at the Corpus Christi gym here.

Jimmy Cagulangan sparked the hosts's role for the Cooking Oil division of NBC president and league IVP Mayor Ramhal Tomimbo by sinking the triple that tied the count at 81 and extended the contest with seven seconds left in regulation and sealing the last four points in the extra period.

The 6-foot-2 Cagulangan finished with 21 points. He was supported by Aldrin Monsanto and Rudel Shallat, who had 17 each, and Noni Igandolan and Marvin Tacolod with 15 and 14, respectively.

Spring-Tagaytay's win spoiled a 27-point performance by Jimmy Bermudez, top gunner of Don Mariano Pilod's Bravos.

Mayor Reynaldo Dandipuli Cena's Ozamiz cagers trailed 18-19 at the end of the first quarter, but surged ahead 52-36 at the even midwaypoint behind back-to-back second-frame three-point circles.

Marlon Bayers, Medford Gumpilo and playmaker Leo Gonzalez provided the big shots for Ozamiz, snapping a two-game run by the coalesced Explorers of Mayor Sammy Co, late conference's Lanao Finalists.

Ramon Pilod, near Mahoon barangayer, who led the Explorers' lineup of Tribu Sagbo in the quarterfinals, was held to 13. Friday, leaving the scoring chores to co-Cebuano guard Bob Johnson and Peter Nieves, who tallied 21 and 20 points, respectively.

Game 2 of the semifinal series sees former playmates pressure more last night. Should Spring and Ozamiz prevail, they would advance to the best-of-three finals.

The scores:

SPRING TAGAYTAY (S)—Cagulangan 21, Monsanto 17, Shallat 17, Igandolan 15, Tomimbo 14, Ramirez 5, Tagamolila 5, Bayers 5, Gumpal 2.

MUNTI OZAMIZ (S)—Gonzalez 22, Ligahon 18, Cabanog 15, Jamed 11, Dapalar 10, Lupo 5, Amparo 5, Tamano 4, Mendez 4, Martinez 2.

Quarters: 23-31, 46-46, 82-66, 98-80 (reg.); 98-96 (OT).

Top US cocker says NCA derby toughest event

SAN GIAU, THE TOP COCKER IN THE UNITED States and the most recent championship derby winner in the Philippines, believes that the big-bread Cockers' Association (NCA) World Championship Derby is the toughest whenever it is held because the entries are comprised of the best cockers in the Philippines and the US.

This year, the NCA World Championship Derby will be held on Jan. 9, 11 and 13, 2007, as well as on other three-cock fights.

Major players in local cockfighting will duke it out during the event. Norm Dizon, the group of champion author Sirbon Uy has signified their intention to fight it out in the championship. Oscar Dungcanan, former mayor Sebastian Duncil also wanted to join the fray.

Aside from Dan Gray, leading cockers from the US will flock to the PCC. Oklahoma's Bobby Barfield, one of the biggest names in American cockfighting, has said he will not rest until he emerges as the winner of the derby.

Part of the proceeds of all NCA derbies goes to the cockers' scholarship fund for needy college students. At present, the NCA sponsors four scholars taking up Veterinary Medicine and two scholars taking up Poultry Science at the University of the Philippines, Los Baños.

Maninding, Sarte rule Shago racing

RED MANINDING AND MING SARTE domstated their respective divisions to emerge as the biggest runners in the 2nd Shago-Narong horserace series.

Maninding bagged his second straight overall title at the expense of runner-up Perose Mendiola and third place Noel Herrera.

Sarte, on the other hand, claimed the novice's title. Douglas Mendiola and Jose Gonzales finished second and third overall in the novice class.

Maninding will start his drive for a third straight overall championship when the event, participated in by drivers from TNCC Club Members, Grupo Toyota, Volkswagen, Galvanized Iron Club, Bulacan Auto Club, Explorer Motorworks, Big Chill and Team Air gets under way in February at the Mandaquit Avenue.

The competition will run for nine months culminating with the annual awards at the Manila Hotel. Shago Racing is promoted by FLEF mgt/ttt.

La Salle, JRU dispute plum

RAMOS FAVORITE DE LA SALLE AND SUSprise finalist zone third shoot for the FROM-Flying V Homegrown Invitational Cup title in a winner-take-all rematch at 4 p.m. today at the Philsports Arena.

The Archers have come a long way from their lowly overtime win against Letran in the opener to their undoubted dismantling of the University of the East in the semifinals.

The Bombers, a post-seventh player in the NCAA, banked on the gritty plays of their unheralded corps of Jeric Teng and Ryan Ramos.

Also battling in a knockout contest are the UE Maestros and the FEU Tamaraws, who will dispute third place at 2 p.m.

Last Wednesday, rookie Rabie Maldoza and Rico Maierhofer led the Archers to a 78-67 semifinal triumph against the Warriors to extend their winning streak to six games.

With Frans Pessumaster calling the shots, the Archers ranged off with a 9-0 sweep—including a 7-5-71 win versus Letran and a 60-58 victory over rival Ateneo—to rule Group B in the elimination round.

In their next semifinal pairing, the hotshot ended to an early double-digit advantage to crush the FEU Tamaraws, 75-64, last Wednesday.

The Bombers and the Tamaraws finished with similar 3-2 records in the elimination to share the top spot in Group A.

Mentored by Ariel Vanguardia, the Bombers are led by Jeric Teng, behind the scrappy hands of Royal Dedicatoria, Mark Cagoco, James Ryan Deve and John Wilson.

Although the Archers are heavily favored, the Bombers put up a tough fight in their elimination-round encounter with the Archers relying on the end-game prowess of everyman Orcales Villanueva and Mardel Bador to pull off a 70-63 victory. Jimmie B. Reyes

San Beda-Alabang, Ateneo keep titles

DEFENDING CHAMPION SAN BEDA COLLEGE-Alabang and Ateneo de Manila maintained their perfect records in this year's Athletic Association of the Philippine Basketball League (PBL) for the Margaux Salcedo championship match. San Beda College, led by overall MVP PATRICK Sotomayor and Prospect Miranda, who averaged MVP among the 12-year-old players, took the measure of La Salle-Greenhills, 41-31. The other age group MVP's were Thomas Torres from La Salle-Greenhills for the 11-year-olds and another La Salle, Miko Rhodesthere as the 10-year-old group. Simone de Ocampo, who Mira Division I started MVP Jay Jacobson and age group MVP Jojo Matthew Mendoza, the latter, over Lourdes School Mandaluyong, 46-37. LSBA's line-up Sotelo averaged the 10-year-old age group MVP Division II champions in the Malcolm was De La Salle-Zobel which beat St. Claire, 20-17.

SPORTSWATCH

DLSU Batch '83 golf tourney

THE DE LA SALLE UNIVERSITY BATCH '83, THEY WANT TO BE CALLED AGAIN, hosts the 4th Golfathon Invitational Golf Tournament, 27, 2006, at the North Course of Canlubang Golf & Country Club. Participants in the tournament will be classified from Class A, B, C, Overall, as well as Ladies and Senior's Open. Formerly known as the DLSU Alumni Golf Tournament, this event was renamed four years ago in honor of the late Br. Jesus Hermida, FSC, former chancellor of the school's sports programs. Presented by Socialite Hermida, known to accompanied by tarpy based DLSU alumni attending Alumni Golf Tournament, championships on March 5, 2006. Entry fee is P7,000 inclusive of green fee, tournament fee, lunch, giveaways and raffle prizes. Participants are requested to submit certified handicaps from their home clubs. For info, call (02)8 7181 and (02)8422, or log it at www.dlsu.ee.ee.

Philippine International Darts Open

THE COUNTRY'S FIRST AND ONLY PLAYERS AND SPECTATORS ARE THE singles titles in the Philippine International Darts Open Battle of the Champions '06 (PIDO-BC '06) on Dec. 22, at the Pearl Billiards Bistro and Bar at the Ritchie at Greenbelt 3, Makati City. Registration is P1,000 for 16 participants in the Men's Open, Ladies' Open and Senior's Open. Formerly known as the Philippine Darts Championship, the event was renamed to PIDO-BC '06 to accommodate the Senior's Open. Formerly known as the Philippine Darts Championship, the event was renamed to PIDO-BC '06 to accommodate the Senior's Open. Formerly known as the Philippine Darts Championship, the event was renamed to PIDO-BC '06 to accommodate the Senior's Open.

WINNERS: Jovani Policarpio (center) named one of the last four runners-up captains the 2006 PAL-FuelFocus Cup recently at the Shangri-la Racing Circuit. With him are runner-up Stuart Mia Dimalanta (left) and third-placer Joe Tanabe.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
Sunday SPORTS
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2005
Editor: Teddyvic S. Melendres

Ball issue gets under skin of animal activists

NEW YORK—[illegible] HAVE HAD the way the new ball damaged their skin, but one action what happens to cows now that the leather [illegible] returning. That was the message from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, who told league MVP Steve Nash and the rest of those who made that complaint to toughen up. In an open letter to the players, Peta's manager of campaigns Dan Shannon wrote: "As we're asking all these 'injuries' must be for a world-class athlete, thousands of cows raised to suffer for scores if the Wilson goes back to a leather basketball." As a compromise, Shannon offered a lifetime supply of hand cream to any player who gives the composite ball another try. "The hand cream comes in a variety of scents, including 'Filthy Rich Organic' (perfect for any overpaid millionaire) and 'Flourish Patchouli'—Mitch, we have a whole case of that just aside for you." Shannon wrote. The letter also had some harsh words for Shaquille O'Neal and LeBron James. "LeBron, maybe you're intimidated. The NBA has given this composite ball for years—so it's not only an adaptation that you missed out on. Maybe you just need some more time to adjust." AP

KOBE Bryant wants but for the Lakers, dumping 53 points on the Rockets in a double-overtime victory. AP/FILE

Wizards zap Heat

End 16-game losing streak to Miami

WASHINGTON—THE WASHINGTON Wizards took advantage of a depleted lineup to blow the game open in the first quarter and beat the Miami Heat, 106-95, on Friday, ending 3 1/2 years of bitter frustration.

Steven mind that the Heat didn't have Dwyane Wade and Shaquille O'Neal. The Wizards were more than relieved under any circumstance to end a 16-game losing streak in their Southeast Division rivals and get their first win in the series since Michael Jordan led a 51-47 victory in Miami in April 2003.

Caron Butler scored a season-high 31 points and had nine rebounds, Gilbert Arenas had 27 points, and Antawn Jamison added 22 points and a career-high five blocked shots for the Wizards. Washington led 48-27 after a first quarter in which it shot 70 percent and held a 26-0 advantage in fast-break points.

As Indianapolis, Danny Granger scored a career-high 25 points and the Pacers hit a season-high 12 3-pointers as a 112-98 drubbing of the New York Knicks.

At Cleveland, Larry Hughes scored 22 points and LeBron James flirted with his first triple-double (his season as the Cavaliers thumped Seattle, 108-84.

Hughes, making his second straight start after missing 18 games with a sprained ankle, went 11-of-16 from the floor. The Cavaliers shot a blistering 65 percent in the first half.

At Toronto, TJ Ford had 17 points, nine rebounds and eight assists as the Raptors ripped New Jersey, 96-78, for its second straight victory without Chris Bosh.

At Dallas, Jason Terry scored 19 points and the Mavericks built a big early lead en route to whipping the Nets, 95-79.

Philadelphia was without Allen Iverson and Chris Webber and lost its 10th straight.

Philadelphia has lost the last five games since Iverson, the 2001 NBA MVP and the face of the franchise for 11 years, demanded a trade and was sent home by the 76ers while they try to fulfill his request.

At Memphis, Tennessee, Zaza Pachulia scored 22 points, Speedy Claxton added 19 points and 13 assists, as Memphis rained Pete Carril's season debut by beating the Grizzlies, 97-88.

At Boston, Paul Pierce scored 36 points and Tony Allen added a career-high 30 to help the Celtics extend its winning streak to four via a 109-104 victory over the Denver Nuggets.

At Los Angeles, Kobe Bryant scored a career-high 53 points, making 14-of-35 free throws, and the Lakers rallied from a 23-point deficit to beat Houston, 111-101, in double overtime.

Bryant's 53rd career game of 50 or more points came against Yao Ming, who led the Rockets with 31 points, 11 rebounds and a career-high eight blocked shots.

At Portland, Oregon, Zach Randolph had 30 points and seven rebounds, and the Trail Blazers won its season-high fourth straight game, 109-99, over the LA Clippers. AP

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SALAGATTE, fireworks and colors from the Aviation Hights highlight the Asian Games' closing ceremonies. AFP

No stopping the Chinese as curtains fall on Asiad

DOHA, QATAR—THERE WAS DOPING. There was a death. There were more medals and more countries than ever before. And there was no stopping the Chinese.

The Qatari's decision to prove that the Arab world is ready to host the Olympics came to a close on Friday as the 15-day Asian Games, the biggest sporting event in the world's most populous continent, wrapped up with an unexpected bonus—the host manning Iraq to the final of the one-round, nearly-everyone-beats-everybody, soccer.

Just about everywhere else, however, the games were a celebration of Chinese primacy—and possibly a harbinger of things to come when Beijing hosts the 2008 Olympics.

The Chinese claimed 165 of the 424 golds. The closest competitor was South Korea, with just 58, and Japan with 50.

"I think the Chinese dominance of the games should serve as an impetus for the rest of us to work harder," contended Tomomi Hayashi, the head of the Japanese delegation. "There is much for us to learn."

From the track to the pool to the beach volleyball courts, the Chinese demonstrated yet again that they are not just the strongest sports power in Asia, and they did so with an often young team that they are auditioning for the 2008 Olympics.

China brought the largest team to the Asian Games—647 athletes. Of those, 413 were participating in their first major multi-sport games and averaged just 21.3 years.

Liu Gang, the world record holder in the 110-meter hurdles, headlined China's athletics team. But he didn't need to shine, breezing to an easy victory in 13.15 seconds for an Asian Games record, nearly half a second slower than his world-record of 12.88.

China had a harder time in the pool, where it had to split the gold with Japan, and South Korea proved strong in the team sports, defeating Chinese opponents in field hockey and volleyball.

But Qatar, which is planning to bid for the 2016 Olympics, the current host hasn't a growing ground and, with more than 10,000 athletes from all 45 countries and territories represented in the Asian Olympic Council, they were on without problems—both expected and unforeseen.

With doping controls tighter than ever, two weightlifters from Myanmar and two more from Uzbekistan were disqualified for using banned substances. A bodybuilder from Iraq was also caught with the steroid nandrolone in his bloodstream.

Heavy rain drenched many of the events, catching organizers in risk desert country off guard.

The games took on a tragic note at midpoint, when Hiu Hoying-chil, a 47-year-old member of South Korea's three-day event team and a former Olympian, was crushed by his horse after losing a jump on a mud-slicked course. It was the first death of a competitor in the games' 53-year history. AP

Real Spicy eyes 10th victory

By Manny B. Castillo

REAL SPICY, HANDS DOWN THE HOTTEST horse for the year, sets out as the prime favorite today when the oldest stakes race—the Presidential Gold Cup—is flagged off at the Santa Ana Park in Makati.

Post time is 5:30 in the afternoon and the program is capped by the four-year-old Spicy Tale to be ridden by jockey Jessie Guce. Real Spicy is bred to add down his second Gold Cup and join a roster of champions that has decorated this 54-year-old event.

The journey is set for 2,050 meters as challenge is expected to come from defending champion Empire King, classy Manhattan, former Asiatic champion Juggernaut and Boss' Spicy's toughest entry Euro Sheila.

Real Spicy has been undefeated in nine starts for the year. The handsome horse has fifteen total track records along the way, the dominant for the Gold Cup the last to fall during the Diploma where he clocked two minutes and nine seconds under rainmud punishment.

Jessie R. Guce partners Real Spicy, Lord Jansen handles Empire King, Dominador Borbe rides Manhattan, Jonathan Hernandez mount Juggernaut and Pat Dilema hoots Euro Sheila.

Wind Runner (Manolito Espiritu), Native Land (Louie Balbosa) and War Alert (Ali Ebrosa) round out the field in the P2.5 million race that gives P1.5 million to the winner.

Meanwhile, 3-year-old filly Fairy Queen, with Lord Jansen aboard, comes up with a romance finish to rule the first Magic Millions Pl Million stakes over Golden Jade yesterday clocking 1:36.6(4) for the mile worth P600,000.

IN THIS ISSUE
Full-time mom finds she's a little country /B3

Sunday BIZ
Business/Features Editor Margie Quiogue-Espino

Christmas means big bucks for junk art

Women show there is money from trash

MINES may raise the ruckus of some Cordilleran, but Baguio housewives found a way to reshape unwanted discard into pretty Christmas decor.

BAGUIO CITY—Something old has become something new for Christmas at downtown Baguio's Malcolm Square, drawing the interest of Christmas shoppers.

On display are giant lanterns, unique yuletide presents, and Christmas trees made of recycled paper, discarded boom boxes and milk cans.

"Christmas has given junk art a much needed break in the summer capital," said Mila Cosalan, one of the city's recycled art pioneers.

Cosalan helped promote junk art into a reality in 1990, when the city government and non-government organizations began supporting entrepreneurs who found new ways of retailing recycled products.

For a while, she says, the recycling fad helped keep their trade in the limelight.

Cosalan says Romeo Cotoco, chief of the city's general services office, set up a junk art shop at a mall here and it encouraged the trade for some time.

But many of the retailers eventually dropped junk art because of the waning interest, she says.

"Our biggest revenues came up to P20,000 in a year and we were happy for that. We're all housewives and this is just extra income.

SOLEDAD Kalonia holds Christmas stars made of recycled paper.

MILA Cosalan helped make junk art a popular trend in Baguio, beginning with these colorful flowers made of recycled paper bottles.

Christmas means big bucks for junk art

TURTLE-SHAPED bags made of recycled paper sells for P350

From page B1

Use many of us," she says.

So when the city opened the harare, junk art traders needed some convincing, Gonales says.

"We all make our products by hand, and because we are all housewives, many of us started complaining that the work had caused veins to pop out of our wrists," she says.

They made the right choice.

Soledad Salonia, owner of Binalaang Kibuk Handicrafts, sold recycled paper swine shaped into a P350 Christmas tree and dozens of angel tree decors.

"We appreciate the interest. We've been trying to get investors to come see our good investments," she says. Ducaret Galleros and JP Espiritu, Inquirer Northern Luzon

PAPER-MACHE cat photo cases that sell for P29

MLA Gonales helped make junk art a popular brand in Baguio.

MANI Fernandez, 23, reconstructs destroyed boot-leather into wallets and recycle leather bags.

HOME ITEMS made of recycled paper

TURNING used plastic cups into colorful Christmas decor actually makes good business sense for housewives in Baguio who promote recycling.

CHILDREN are drawn to Christmas decors that look brand new, but are actually made of recycled rooster hair

Full-time mom finds she's 'a little bit country'

Forty-something shows it's never too late to start a venture

By Amy R. Remo

IT WAS ONLY IN HER 40s that Marvee T. Avila discovered her penchant for designing and renovating simple household items into elegant, practical décor.

"I like to experiment with indigenous household items and turn them into something both decorative and functional," says Avila, who owns Country Boy'z Enterprises. "But it was only last 2004 that I discovered I have the talent—that is, when my kids got older and I had more time in my hands."

Put up in October 2004, Avila's store, County Boy'z in Heroes, is a mish mash of custom household decorative items from bamboo fund holders, collapsible trays, lighters, fans, key chains, household utensils, soldiers, candle holders to wall decors and table tops.

Avila relates she used to work for Philippine Air Lines, but had to stop to take care of her sons.

BASKETS are among Avila's bestsellers.

Even as a "full-time" mom, Avila says she used to have a very hectic schedule, with her daily rides beginning at 5:30 a.m.

Participating in her sons' school activities and in parent-teacher conferences also kept her busy the rest of the day.

"So when my sons grew older and I had more time for myself, I decided as you it to good use and provide employment for a few, opportunities for my suppliers and their workers, and, with a little luck, maybe even raise income for me," says Avila.

She relates that the idea to create, design and sell decorative and functional household items came to her in one of her trips to at her cousin's house in Bataan.

According to Avila, she bought a few bags from her cousin, who exports them along with other indigenous products.

Avila, who gave bags away at Christmas gifts, thought it might be a good idea to bring these products to Manila, along with other items from the collapsible trays.

"I thought it was a feasible idea so, I created this small space here in Market Market and tried selling a few items first," says Avila.

And it was feasible indeed, Avila's first foray into the retail business was successful.

Avila managed to squeeze the puppies' attention for her cute and unique market bags, keychains and other similar 'hilary' stuff, as well as the Ifugao basket and foreigners for her indigenous products.

Her bestsellers are mainly basic items such as trays, wallets and bags. These retail for as low as P150 to as high as P1,500.

Most of Avila's products are sourced from the provinces like Bataan and Tarlac, and use indigenous materials.

Choosing her goods

"If I won't buy it, I won't sell it," says Avila. "This has always been my principle in selecting the items I give for sale."

According to Avila, the items that she sells are unique because she mostly designs and renovates them.

For example, her rectangular collapsible trays are actually ordinary fruit trays she got from Tarlac.

She talked to her supplier to recreate for her a multi-purpose tray of different shapes, colors and sizes, whose basic frame of the trays can be replaced and folded and made reversible.

Avila's trays could be used as fruit trays, bread holders and even as bathroom organizers. Beach-resort owners would sometimes order trays for their resort rooms and bathrooms.

Avila also has what she calls as flying saucer, which is actually just a "hand" holder, she designed herself. These holders also become quite a hit in the provinces and beach resorts.

"I pick up my ideas everywhere. But what's more important than my ideas is the close and constant communication between me and my suppliers so that we can come up with the best design possible," explains Avila.

"That's why," she adds, "even if I do not export or manufacture, my products reach foreign shores as they have become favorite gifts of balikbayans and foreigners alike."

"My products have become popular to those people because they are unique, affordable and proudly Philippine made," says Avila. "Most importantly, they can easily fit inside one's luggage as most of my basic items can be folded flat without necessarily making ugly creases."

Competitive edge

Avila admits that she is likewise faced by certain difficulties as do other vendors.

"While many come by the store and admire the products, unfortunately, they have other priorities for their resources," laments Avila. "My only recourse is to call the attention and benefits of buying my products and how these can improve their lives."

Also, other than her products being uniquely decorative and functional, Avila claims that another edge she has over other similar stores is that she personally mans her store day in and out.

"First, you have to look your best to be presentable. You have to be more available and outgoing. You can't be picky with who you talk to," she says. "You have to make 'tinda' with them first because in the end, they might end up buying your stuff or they can refer you to their families and friends."

"That is more of me. That's why I still try two sales ladies to observe me while I sell my products," adds Avila.

While Avila is quite content with the relative success of her store, she says she would like to take it slow.

"I have many plans for the fu-

HANGAR-inspired baskets designed by Avila.

AVILA in front of her quaint store

CANDLES, banners, wash-finish lighters are also available at Avila's store.

Couple starts online photo album venture

Home-based business growing

By Sharon Rakay-Piscasio

ONLINE BUSINESSES SPELL inconvenience to those who do not want to leave home to buy something or to avail of a service.

Couple Dirk and Colleen Tan-Chiang think their business is suited to a lot of women—who have to balance career and motherhood.

Their business after all is home-based so it allows Colleen to take care of their kids.

Dirk stresses that his wife, a Business Administration major in Computer Application from DLSU-CSB, "runs the show" while he, a Computer Science degree holder from Ateneo and an MBA from Ateneo Graduate School of Business in the US, does the software programming, helps out in lay-outing and acts as the "PR" of the business.

PicturesBook

ThePicturesShop.com is an online service which lets our supplied photos via the Internet in a book-like format called PicturesBook.

This is the first online business for the couple who runs a pizza franchise in Marikina. They started PicturesShop during the second quarter of this year. "Before that, we were doing it mainly for

SAME of PicturesShop's layouts

friends and family," Dirk shares.

The business mainly started out from their own needs when the couple had their first child.

"We had one daughter then (then) son was born just recently) and just like any new parents, we couldn't get enough of photo-capping our new daughter. We would take lots of pictures of her wherever we go on small trips. We only would develop it and just file it in the free photo clip-on album that the camera shop gives for free. It was just too boring. And when you pick it up later and try to recall what happened in those photos, you don't really remember because you can't put one or capture an emotional picture," Dirk explains.

Later, a friend from the United States showed them a PicturesBook of his kids done by the US online service PicturesOnDisk. The Chiangs liked the book so much that they tried it only to be disappointed in the end.

"The shipping alone cost around $20. It was actually more than the cost of the PicturesBook itself! And when we got our copy, we weren't too happy with the quality from the type of paper used, to the clarity of the colors, etc.," says Dirk.

With that experience the couple, who dabbles a lot on computers, decided to venture in the same business. "We did some trial-and-error until we got the exact effect we wanted for a PicturesBook," he says.

The PicturesBook is 7" x 5" (similar to a 5R size photo), wire-bound and priced at P350.

"We started with 5R because we wanted a format that people can buy around. Moms especially want to put ship it into their handbags to show off their baby pictures to friends and relatives. So the form factor is quite convenient," Dirk says.

They are planning to come up with an 8" x 5" format early next year. The PicturesBook contains 20 pages (four can hold up to 80 photos. However, it can allow a maximum of 26 pages for an extra charge of P25 per page, if the pictures are necessary.

DICK and Colleen Chiang

Personalized

Customers can also include scanned handwritten notes, tickets, stamps and other things associated with every photo to give it a personal, scrapbook-like feel.

The most important component in putting up an online business are a website and an online payment system, says Dirk. One should also have a "decent PC with a good-sized monitor, photo-editing software and the rest is outsourced (like binding and printing)."

Dirk claims that although all their orders are mainly from the Philippines, people from as far as the Middle East are registering at their website. Tapping the foreign market is quite tough, because, because of international shipping costs.

"Interestingly though, there is a secondary market for foreigners. Lots of them are OFWs. And instead of them printing their photos there and mailing it to their relatives here, it will come out cheaper for them to just upload to our service, have us print it into a PicturesBook then deliver it to their relatives for free," declares Dirk.

For those who do not have broadband connections, pick-up service is provided for an extra charge of P50. Customers who prefer this option can just burn the photos on CD and give it to the messenger together with the payment. CDs can also be sent via courier if the location is too far for pick-up.

Albums are delivered for free nationwide within 5 to 7 days after payment has been made.

A customer can order multiple copies of the PicturesBook. In fact, the images sent by customers are saved for a maximum of one year in case the customer orders for reprints.

Although most photo developing centers offer lay-outing and editing services, Dirk enumerates the advantages of ThePicturesShop.com.

"Most developing centers tend to cater to a mass production type of model ... They run pre-existing templates and just slap-and-drop your photos to it. This 'canned' approach allows them to produce a lot of albums at a very fast rate.

"In contrast, our service uses meticulous hand lay-outing. We also do a lot of color correction and other enhancements because point-and-shoot camera users often do not use proper lighting ... We manually correct these flaws in the process of lay-outing. And, of course, we're online. So you don't have to travel through traffic to avail of our time-saving service," Dirk explains.

Recently, the online venture introduced its newest product, PicturesCalendars, which has the same dimension and price as the PicturesBook.

Asked what advice he can give to would-be online entrepreneurs? Dirk has this to say:

"I think online business owners should be very particular about the quality of their products. Unlike a physical retail store, where you have the benefit of allowing the customers to touch or feel the actual product. So I think they mainly rely on word-of-mouth or take a leap of faith. Because of that, we have to make sure that our product is up to par for the finished product. They will be satisfied."

For inquiries, check www.thepicturesshop.com

Deutsche Bank supports microfinance in RP

DEUTSCHE BANK MANILA HAS signed a loan agreement with Taytay sa Kauswagan Inc. (TSKI)—an NGO involved in microfinancing—for PHP1,852,100 ($2.23 million). This agreement marks the first tranche of an overall loan to TSKI equivalent to $4.5 million—which has been put forward by The Global Commercial Microfinance Consortium, which is managed by Deutsche Bank.

Heiko Graf, chief country officer of Deutsche Bank in the Philippines, says the signing shows the importance that Deutsche Bank has given micro-finance and its extensiveness as a new way of alleviating poverty in developing countries. "We are pleased to have this opportunity to invest in poverty alleviation through TSKI," said Graf.

The consortium investors which include Deutsche Bank AG's Cooperative Bank, DE Shorell Lynch, Munich Re, Standard Life, Stone Street, Scotchmail, as well as IFL, UK and French development agencies and individuals, have joined together to apply their business know-how, capital and development initiative to market-based solutions addressing the alleviation of global poverty.

Launched in November 2005, the Global Commercial Microfinance Consortium has funds of $80.6 million to help microfinance groups in poor countries bridge the gap between demand and supply in their financial services.

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

MITSUBISHI MOTORS

MITSUBISHI MOTORS Genuine parts

It has come to the attention of MITSUBISHI MOTORS CORPORATION of Japan (hereinafter "MMC") that a number of business entities in the Philippines are selling counterfeit Mitsubishi automotive spare parts for automobiles. In doing so, these business entities are committing trademark infringement against the trademark owner of the Mitsubishi trademark and unfair competition against MMC, crimes that are punishable by 2 to 5 years of imprisonment and a fine of Pesos 50,000 to 200,000 under Republic Act No. 8293, the Intellectual Property Code of the Philippines.

More significantly, these unscrupulous establishments are endangering the lives and safety of the motoring public by passing off substandard automotive spare parts as genuine Mitsubishi-branded spare parts. These counterfeit products have not been subjected to the rigorous testing and quality control standards that Mitsubishi Motors has become synonymous with.

In the past few weeks, MMC has intensified its campaign against those engaged in this illegal activity. A number of these establishments have been raided by the National Bureau of Investigation, and a large number of counterfeit spare parts have been seized. Criminal charges for unfair competition and trademark infringement are being prepared against the owners of these establishments.

MMC shall not hesitate to bring immediate legal action against those who are importing, selling, and distributing counterfeit Mitsubishi spare parts.

The public is hereby advised to deal with authorized Mitsubishi dealers of automotive spare parts to avoid being deceived. Any information that may lead to the investigation and subsequent prosecution of persons or entities engaged in the illegal importation, sale and distribution of counterfeit spare parts should be directed to MMC's anti-counterfeiting legal counsel:

BENGZON NEAL LUCILLE
Intellectual Property Attorneys

Acer turns 30, to continue channel business model

AT THE CELEBRATION OF ACER INC.'S 30th anniversary, chairman J.T. Wang stated that the channel business model has proved to be the mainstream model in the PC industry and he highlighted that Acer will continue with this business model with the confidence to break through new barriers as the company marches toward its goal of becoming a global top-10 PC brand by 2007.

Wang reflected that in 2001, the direct business model for the PC industry was very much in vogue, while the channel model was quite unstable and widely unexplored at that time. As the industry developed, however, the channel business model gained mainstream status and has in fact begun to show its superiority. "Our business direction over the last few years has clearly been validated," stated Wang.

Acer president Gianfranco Lanci indicated that, following the company's restructuring in the year 2000, Acer has built a highly effective model for its brand business; this model has laid the foundation for Acer's growth and success in the last few years. "This model—which can be duplicated across countries—now serves as a reference for other Acer subsidiaries," continues that Acer's long-term vision of implementing an indirect business model to compete with the direct model was necessary," Lanci said.

Since its inception in 1976, Acer has pursued the goal of becoming a globally recognized high-tech brand business, even while facing different challenges at different times, and has consistently modified its direction accordingly in order to overcome difficulties and keep moving forward. Acer today held its 30th anniversary celebration to express its profound appreciation of all friends who have supported Acer along the way.

Acer ranks as the world's No. 4 branded PC vendor.

Sun's triple treats promo on

SUN CELLULAR RECENTLY LAUNCHED its new offering—Sun Triple Treats.

The scheme involves forming a group of three Sun subscribers and getting a 10-percent bonus discount on Sun Unlimited and Info Calls products. Once the group reaches P750 worth of combined load within 30 days, each member will automatically get a bigger discount of 30 percent on all Sun Unlimited and Info Calls products.

To Join via SMS, type REG<space> First Name/Last Name/Address and send to 333. Sun will reply the "group name" which you must send to your barkada and other potential members. To join the second and third barkada member, key in JOIN<space> Group Name/First Name/Last Name/Address and send to 333.

Sun Cellular's Triple Treats Price Overload Promo runs from Oct. 23, 2006 to Jan. 16, 2007.

RP's real estate event gaining prominence

THE PHILIPPINES' PIONEERING INTERnational real estate event is gaining global prominence and drawing big-time participants from all over the world.

Organized by US-based event organizer Expo and Convention Promotions Inc. (ECPI), the 1st Annual Metro Manila International Expo and Conference (emmaiexpo.com) is positioning the Philippines as Asia's top global second-home destination.

ECPI is making ARIBEC affordable to attendees and exhibitors to encourage wider participation.

Major players in Europe, United States, Canada, Central and South America, and Asia have confirmed participation.

This was revealed by Rita Balbuena Arcia, European division manager of the Switzerland office of the Berlin International Group, the proponent of ARIBEC during the Philippine International Convention Center and the World Trade Center on Dec. 5-10 next year.

"With the Asian economy booming, ARIBEC is a must-event for the world's key division makers, players and thinkers of the global real estate industry," Arcia pointed out.

Properties Expo 2007 set

THE REAL ESTATE INDUSTRY LAUNCHES the Philippine Properties Exposition 2007, the largest annual gathering of real property developers.

The Expo brings together property sellers and buyers in a four-day event.

It will be held at the SM Mall of Asia in Pasay City from Jan. 25 to 28 and will cater primarily to the growing number of seven Filipino workers, who are now starting to contribute to real estate growth.

The event's organizers, led by the Cebu Initial Housing Foundation Inc. (CIHFI), have forged agreements with relevant government agencies, like the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, the Department of Tourism, and the Department of Labor and Employment to help guide Filipinos working abroad on real estate opportunities in the country.

The CIHFI, the social responsibility arm of the Chamber of Real Estate and Builders' Association, has also tapped computerowner organizations, such as the Philippine Software Industry, the Philippine Association of Service Exporters Inc., and the Seafarers' Board.

For details and inquiries, call (632) 864-0224, 892-2030 (cell) or (0919) 849-3642.

Women are working more, still earning less than men

WOMEN MAY BE WORKING more, whether it's the office, the shop floor or an employer's home, but they are still sewing and earning less than men do.

Unicef reports that in 2005, women accounted for some 40 percent of the world's economically active population.

But women in the East Asia and Pacific region earned only an estimated 42 percent of men's income. Even in industrialized countries, women earn only 57 percent of men's income.

The study on fulfilling women's social and economic rights for the betterment of children appears in the State of the World's Children (SOWC) 2007, Unicef's flagship. The SOWC 2007 argues that when gender equality is achieved, the world's children are positively affected.

The gender wage gaps exist across countries with available evidence showing that women's nominal wages are roughly 20 percent lower than men's.

This earnings gap often translates to lower resources for children's health care, adequate nutrition and education, since women function as children's primary caregivers.

Women also earn lower assets than men due to smaller salaries, lack of control over household income, gender biases in property and inheritance laws, and even state land distribution programs.

In a survey of eight developing countries, women daily worked an average of one hour and nine minutes more than men. In Mexico, for example, women in paid employment still undertook 33 hours of household tasks each week against the men's contribution of six hours, in a time-use survey in India, women spent 35 hours a week on domestic chores and caring for children and the elderly. Men did the same for only four hours.

A situation analysis commissioned by Unicef and the International Labor Organization found that majority of trafficked children in the Philippines are also girls. This is attributed to the high demand for women in housekeeping, for jobs in the service sector, and for the trafficking trade for sexual exploitation. Since the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003, reported cases in the Philippines have been on the upswing. Out of 116 cases in 2005, only seven convictions have so far been made.

Filipino girls and boys need high investment in education which girls sometimes with more school participation.

Net primary school attendance (NPSA) in 89 percent of total number of children of primary school age. But secondary school enrollment for females is 67 percent of total number of children of secondary school age. The Philippines also experienced an adult literacy rate of 93 percent.

Research data from Mexico, Ecuador and the Philippines also point to children trafficking from migration psychological effects when parents migrate to work. An estimated three to six million Filipino children under 18 years old have migrant parents. While remittances bolster the household finances, Filipino children of migrant mothers have reported feeling angry, lonely and afraid. In other countries, children were also found to be at higher risk of abuse and trafficking when they were left in the custody of relatives and friends while parents worked abroad.

Two very old and the art of . . .

From page B6

mom? so cut it, she is no expert too. It may take her longer to fill an order because her designs are very intricate. Pinalling her was making sheet of a miracle.

Her mother, the late Priscilla, was a favorite of former first lady Imelda Marcos and was frequently picked up to demonstrate her craft before foreign visitors. Those were the days, Lita's sisters, also named Lita, reminisce.

Lita has 23 patented designs featuring rural scenes—kuliay kubo, **woman in basi's saya, Maria Clara**, man pounding rice, etc. Lita made herself. Lita has more than a hundred designs, some she inherited from her mother, others were designed by teacher Jean Ramos who passed away in 1992. Lita's designs are usually delicate small flowers and leaves with an occasional butterfly, kuliay kubo, raccoon tree, dove and the like. She now designs her Christmas scapers.

Both Lita and Lita are colored or white papel de japon. While Lita herself does the baking in favored for the improved paper. Lita removes herself with locally produced paper. The probably accounts for the difference in price for the cascos—P50/dozen for a hundred of the improved ones.

LEFT-handed Luz Duenas prepares to cut following traced design

Lita uses three heirloom scissors which belonged to her mother, while Lita has about 15 scissors in all, some paraphernalia from friends who have traveled abroad. Liz does everything herself, from buying the paper, to the designs, to the tracing of the designs, to making not the designs, and the sharpening of the scissors.

Unlike Lita who wears glasses, Liz, who is left-handed, wears none. She rests her eyes by looking at the greenery around her or dabbing intermittent water from Lourdes, France, on it. Liz works on her art in the big terrace of her Malolos home where she moved in 1991. There, she spends on sunny light and natural air-conditioning.

To make the paper cassocs, Liz and Lita:

1. Cut the papel de japon into the desired size, 3.5 inches by 10 inches for Liz, or 4.25 inches by 10 inches for Lita.

2. Fold six or four sheets together, six of the imported paper, four of the local paper. Lita staples the sheets of paper together up to the design.

3. Using a template of the desired design, trace the design on the prepared paper using a blunged pencil number 2.

4. Cut out the design using special scissors like Solingen's cuticle scissors which have narrow, slightly curved tips. At this point Liz cuts out the stapled portion as the finishes the cutout.

5. Press each batch of cutouts between the pages of an old magazine or used society workbook to keep the damp Filipino heat getting crumpled.

Today Liz can finish 300 pieces in five days. In her youth, Liz could do 100 pieces in a day. At 66, Liz says, she can finish less, "nanggamit a subtle."

Liz can be reached by PLDT landline 044-7930507 or in her mission home at 93 Isang Wika, Cutcutan, Gita Iloni in 143 Bayanni St., Poblacion, San Miguel, Bulacan. Her cell phone number is 0917.8076226.

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Sunday BIZ

Two very old ladies and the art of cutting pastillas wrappers

LUIZ OCAMPO, 84, wears no glasses and has steady hands.

They lovingly create wrappers that people just throw away

LITA Ramos Liboiron, 72, pastillas wrapper artist

By EC Estrada
Contributor
Photos by Manny Bandoy

THIS STORY IS NOT A SUCCESS STORY, at least not in financial terms.

Although if these two ladies were living in another country where creativity, labor and artistic work command a high price, their story would be pretty well off now.

Luz Ocampo, 84, and Lita Ramos Liboiron, 72, are into traditional pastillas wrapper-making because of their love for the craft. Both belong San Miguel, Bulacan, they are native to keeping the art of the traditional pastillas wrapper alive.

The traditional pastillas wrapper is cutout papel de japon in different designs and colors. It can be personalized with the name of the recipient or convey messages such as "Mabuhay," "Happy Birthday," or "Merry Christmas."

December is the peak season. Aside from the orders for birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, there are orders for Christmas. They have in stock batches of six or four which are easy to count when drop-in customers or foreigner-visitors ask for them.

The two do not require a deposit for special orders. There is no guarantee that an order will be picked up and paid for. Only last month, Lita got a personal call from someone she knew, the owner of a well-known Bulacan sweets shop, for an order of Christmas paper cartage featuring the Christmas Star.

She made the designs and filled up the order only to be told that it was too late—to mind those ahead as the customer had planned and that she would not be needing them anymore.

Lita says she wished the customer who had placed the order had taken them anyway, if only to appreciate the effort she had put into it—making the designs and cutting the paper out.

This also happened to Luz last Christmas, supposedly the season of love. An order for a well-known hotel in Makati which said, "Pasko na . . ." was not picked up either. Luz says (she is off the record, but it is relevant to the article. We are leaving out the name of the hotel though.

Learning the craft

Luz learned the craft during "praymino" in school when she was about 11 or 12 years old. Lita learned it from her mother, Petrida Garchitorena Ramos when she was growing up.

Both have given demonstrations before foreign tourists upon the invitation of municipal officials. Luz has been written about in magazines and newspapers and even in books, the last exhibited her knowledge and interest. People do take advantage of simple folks like her and Lita.

Though Lita may not be "the flavor of the

ICONIC CUT Lita's intricate designs

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Inquirer president greets young guests at the party Chrome for children.

Sunday LIFESTYLE

Editor Chelo Bersa-Formoso

Do they know it's Christmas?

GIFTS are distributed to each kid.

OF COURSE, THE KIDS know. But some Filipino kids can't get into the spirit of Christmas because of severe material lack.

Their needs—and wishes—are basic, startling, hazardous. Like kids their age and anyone else, they just want to celebrate Christmas simple, meaningfully.

The Inquirer Lifestyle staff joined a number of Metro Manila's urban poor kids in a Christmas party at the PSE parking lot organized by Hands On Manila, and got to know their hopes, dreams and wishes this Yuletide.

As expected, poor children don't need much to celebrate Christmas. Their wishes are simple, even heartrending.

So why not play Santa to these kids and help grant their wishes? Contact Sian Dee Marquez of Hands On Manila at 8437844 or 8405225.

The opportunity for you to live and fulfill the Christmas message is there. These kids and their innocent and sincere wishes offer you the chance to give with a heart.

Inquirer's Chelo de la Vega, party organizer, starts the fun rolling.

Maria Cecilia, 12

Address: Lives with parents and seven siblings in the Century Wonder Creek 2 complex area

Wishlist: New shoes and clothes, and some food for her family to share on Christmas Eve

Nissa Jayne, 12

Address: Lives with parents and four siblings in Caloocan City

Wishlist: To get the right eyeglasses and medicines for her hypertensive mother, Rhodora, and for her father to land a permanent job

Charlie Ann Romero, 10

Address: Lives with four siblings and parents Fernando, 32, and Rosalinda, 30, in Caloocan City

Wishlist: For the family to make their home, which was ravaged by the 2006 typhoons, habitable again

Do they know it's Christmas?

Let poor Pinoy kids know it's Christmas by playing Santa to them

SCENES from the Christmas party held for street children by INQUIRER volunteers, with Manila Sta Manila's Breakfast Club (CCF and Guadalupe), Swedenmilan (Sauso, Parañaque), Hermosa Manes (Quezon City) and Childhope Foundation Asia

Toys for young and old

WHETHER a kid's interest in science, sports or art, Toys "R" Us will have what he/she wants.

FIND THE RIGHT GIFT FOR KIDS AND KIDS-at-heart at Toys "R" Us, located at the SM Bonifacio Gallería, lower ground floor, Bobinsons Metro East, and ground floor, Bobinsons Pluto Upa.

Gifts for babies and toddlers include party treasure, rattles and teethers, and fashion solutions, activity toys plus Toys "R" Us exclusives such as Dr. Seuss's medical kits, Sesame stuffies and pram toys, 3-in-1 (2) Activ learning easel and fold-out umbrella stroller.

Girls can have items from Dream Interiors, Animal Alley, Bee Lane, Just Like Home, as well as an assortment of licensed brands.

Indoor and educational toys include Lego, Imaginarium blocks, Jovian PDA, Nintendo DS games, GameBoy Advance SP, TV games and Playstation 3.

Gifts for the whole family include Pictionary games, Uno Stacko and Cards, Tribloop soccer game, board games and more.

The active and sports-minded may like Hoop Yo Hoop, Inchliners sets, Hop Along Pony and Soccer Game sets.

Other items include captain caps, squeezeballs and puzzles, sports watches, flower magnetic pinata, You & Me soft rag dolls, and Goodboy character throw pillows.

World's biggest . . .

from page C4

out of stocks.

For 2007, customers can look forward into more movie and children's footwear, Mercurio said.

Already there are the Shrunnies, a glow-in-the-dark variation that's an instant hit among kids. Due to persistent demand, Gonzalez said next year, Havaianas will also be sold at the Children's section of the Fratum's Department Store with an interactive area.

Gonzalez said Filipinos are look forward to more designs tailored exclusively to the local market. Since it will be Havaianas' 45th anniversary next year, expect more limited- and special-collection lines as well.

Rhinestone Havaianas are also forthcoming, with thin, sexy straps that give them an ultra feminine look. Looking more like sandals than slippers, she said the design works well with skirts and flirty dresses.

Cultural

But of the success of Havaianas in the country is cultural, said Gonzalez. Filipinos, she said, have always wanted to wear slippers. It was just a matter of finding a responsible brand that delivered what it promised.

In a country where it's practically summer all year long, flip-flops are the year-round footwear, hence the need to change styles every two months. (Other countries change styles every three to four months.)

Design inspirations are culled from the world over. Mercurio said Havaianas employs a team to do trend research in Milan, Japan, Thailand, India, Morocco. The new collection of Batalas theme was inspired by the mamyukka dolls.

"We try to [infuse] a little from each market into the collection. We always want to be ahead of everyone else. You may be seeing a few of the 2007 collection, but our production-design team are years ahead already," Gonzalez said.

Mercurio also said there are more than 200 styles to choose from in 60-65 different hues the company churns out in a year. That's not including the limited-edition and those produced for the Philippines alone.

E-mail the author at sjsanchez@inquirer.com.ph

World's biggest flip-flop store opens in Taguig

The new Havaianas outlet at the City Center, Fort Bonifacio, dwarfs even those in Brazil

MARCOS Maranion

ANNE Arceno Gonzales

Text by Rene R. Jandoco
Photos by Jim Cobar Punzalan

NOT ALL FLIP-FLOPS ARE made equal. When it comes to comfort, durability, flexibility and style, nothing comes close to the technology and design behind Havaianas, the brand that's in the shoe closets of at least 500,000 Filipinos, the number growing by the day.

"Havaianas has the edge in the industry in terms of technology for producing the most comfortable rubber slippers in the world," said Hayssa Mourrico, export sales manager and distributions for Ivan and Paulo of Sao Paulo SP, Brazil, the manufacturer of Havaianas.

Manual labor makes up majority of the production work, he said, ensuring quality in every pair. There are 5,200 factory employees who produce the slippers 24 hours a day, seven days a week. There are, in fact, 2.5 million pairs produced each year, enough to circle around the globe 50 times.

Mourrico added that in-house physical therapists also work round-the-clock to safeguard the workers, especially their hands. Of the eight million work hours clocked up by the factory since its inception, the company has not seen any major accidents.

According to Mourrico, Havaianas has also made a pact with Brazil's Institute for Ecological Research to donate 7 percent of net profit from the Havaianas BY line to the institute's conservation programs.

To most growing Philippine demand, Havaianas, the Brazilian flip-flops that made it fashionable to wear the unassuming slippers in just about any occasion, opens its fourth All Flip-Flops outlet at the City Center, Fort Bonifacio. This move officially makes the Philippines home to the world's largest collection of Havaianas footwear, beating even the total outlets in Brazil.

It's like stepping inside an eye-candy museum. The products on display are enclosed in glass to allow those that go flip-over flip-flops, the diehard Havaianistas, enough room to drool and gawk before fighting over the last pair available. (That scenario actually happened once.)

"No other country has this many types of slippers that the Philippines, that's for sure. In Asia, the Philippines ranks No. 1 in sales," said Mourrico.

The Philippines has chainsaws dressed to every thing Havaianas and blogs with uploaded images of the latest finds. Here, reservations are made months in advance, and a bonfire burns at retail stores during product launches, with styles selling out in a mere day or two.

When the brand came out with a chewy design, a clientele rolled up to make reservations on all colors because the slippers were a perfect match to her iconic Vuitton Chewy Monogram bag. Want-ups, price in the Havaianas lives, the thought of pairing the humble slippers with a luxury brand would have been preposterous.

Filipino-inspired

Designs, in fact, are sometimes developed by the company upon suggestions received through e-mail from Filipinos, Mourrico said.

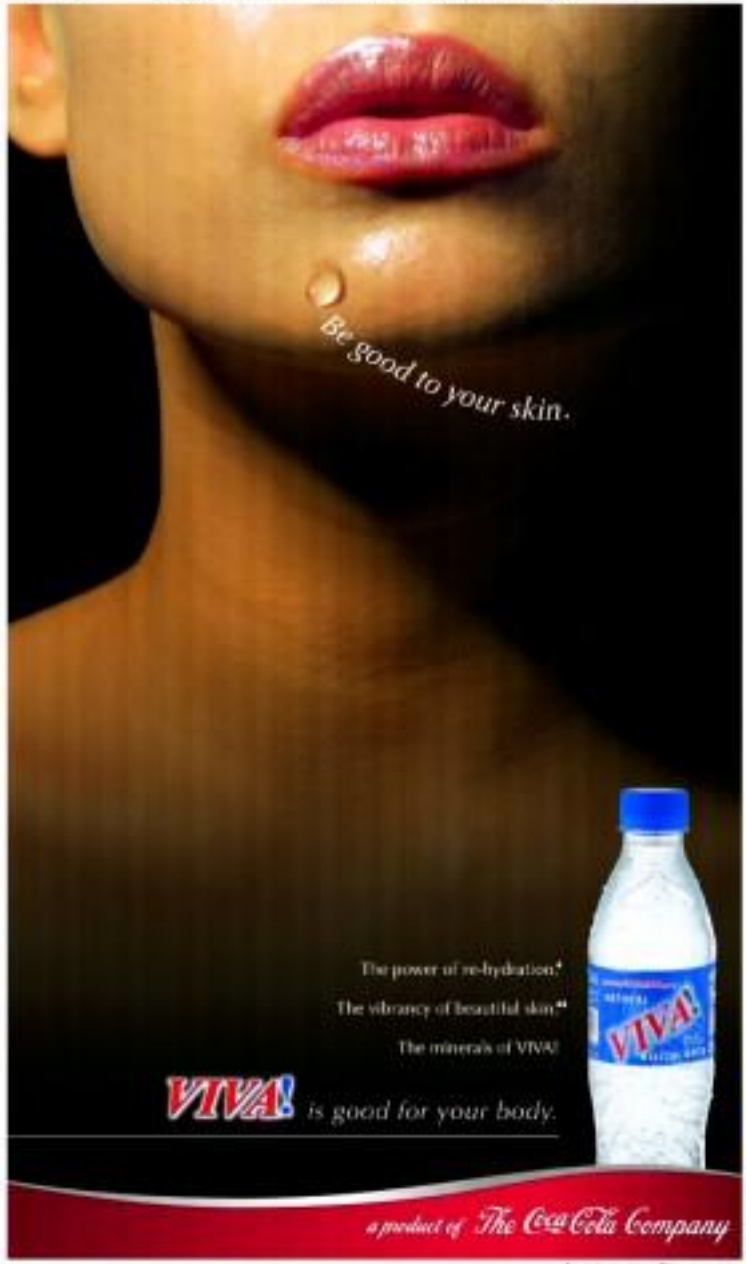
The latest slippers, for instance, was created after Filipinos demanded for the color blue orgasm for listening to consumers, though, as the color is now part of the regular collection and it's one of the hottest selling.

The Havaianas Filipinas, those that carried the national flag designed exclusively for the local market, even received its fair share of distinct hues. Ovaianas Filipino Makers abroad that enterprising Filipinos sold them on e-Bay at $50, said store Manager Gonzales, managing director of Tony SA, the company that brought the brand into the country.

And there have been cute-the-top suggestions, she said, a client at one time wanted to know if it were possible to put the picture of her boyfriend on the slipper design.

The current bestseller is the limited-edition Christmas collection. Retailing at P995, the metallic pair comes with a slipper bag, a limited-edition print, metallic key chain and a card. It makes for an ideal present, and bonus sales, that many branches are late opening.

THE HOME of the largest collection of Havaianas footwear in the world is designed by Gil Cocotheke.



MONSTERS...the glow-in-the-dark line for kids

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
Sunday LIFESTYLE

Divine four

American tenor David Miller, Spanish baritone Carlos Marin, French-via-
Brazil Sebastien Izambard and Swiss tenor Urs Bühler are collectively
known as il Divo, and they're exactly that—divine. Their latest compact disc
"Siempre"—recorded with hits like "Regresa a Mitchi Mitchi," "Without You"
and "Have You Ever Really Loved a Woman?"—makes our list pdq. But you
might as well double (quadruple?) the pleasure by adding tickets to the
sing-alongfest "il Divo—Live in Manila" concert on Jan. 29, 8 p.m., at the
Philippine International Convention Center Plenary Hall.

Call Ticketnet at 891-9999 or SM 8388111 for tickets to the show. Or sign up
for a Smart Infinity Plan 6000 and get a Nokia N73 and two VIP tickets to the
concert. Citibank credit card holders get an exclusive 10-percent discount
when they buy their tickets through TicketWorld.

Make a list and check it twice

Running out of ideas on what to give this Christmas? Here is a guide to help you shop for even the naughty and not-nice. We've included luxury items that will keep your loved ones stay connected yet unwired, as well as more affordable items

There's room to grow at The Residences at Greenbelt

At The Residences at Greenbelt, enjoy life's little comforts with a variety of spacious units that can address your family's every need.

A landmark project of Ayala Land Premier, The Residences at Greenbelt is a luxurious and exclusive enclave set amidst dynamic Greenbelt. With its choice location at the heart of Makati, The Residences puts a wide array of leisure, dining, and entertainment choices within easy reach.

The Residences at Greenbelt is designed not only to give residents direct access to the Greenbelt lifestyle, but also to extend the same premier experience within its very confines. The Residences at Greenbelt offers a wide array of spacious units that suit its sky lifestyle. The one-bedroom and one-bedroom loft units are ideal for successful singles. On the other hand, the two-bedroom, three-bedroom and penthouse units have generous spaces that is not for a non-existent allotment for families who need ample space for their growing kids. For example, bedrooms in the units are laid out thoughtfully to allow flexibility. The children's room in a typical 2-bedroom unit can comfortably fit two beds and a play area. A open bedroom in a 3-bedroom unit can easily be converted into a nursery for a growing brood. The penthouse units—ideal for kids—and their playmates—would love hanging out in the cozy kitchen.

Beyond the unit, a family can also enjoy life's abundance at The 5000, a 5,000 sqm enclave of full-scale amenities at The Residences at Greenbelt. At your choice: begin each morning with a dip in the lap pool, exhilarate your body's vibrancy at the well-equipped fitness center, or work on your golf swing at the spa, or just enjoy being secluded from it all in the garden. And if the kids want to catch a glimpse of a real fantasy is to relax, the world-renowned Greenbelt Children's Center is just a breath away. Wine and dine in one of the many restaurants and cafés, visit the Ayala Museum and Greenbelt parks, or splurge on luxury brands at the numerous shops and boutiques—Greenbelt offers all these exciting options for everyone. Style-conscious and trendy or classic-cutting and poetic, be it to enjoy the amenities of your home, or the all-encompassing ones of Greenbelt.

And with Ayala Land's ever-growing connectivity, The Residences at Greenbelt is the Makati Central Business District, getting to work is only a breeze. A number of prestigious choice retail and business are also close by, so either the office is short stroll away, there's plenty of time to bring the kids to school.

With spacious units, exciting amenities, and direct access to the world's only lifestyle center, families can find their ideal home at The Residences at Greenbelt. Buyers can rest easy in their choice with Ayala Land Premier's unmatched track record for delivering high-quality and innovative developments. And with Ayala Property Management Corporation's unique housing culture, and the premium management services, your unit is in good and trusted hands.

The Residences at Greenbelt offers luxury, privacy, and ultimate comfort in truly unrivaled Ayala Land's trademark legacy of enhancing the residents' quality of life with its portfolio of prime locations, superior customer care, and quality management.

For more information about the units at The Residences at Greenbelt, call 729-7900, e-mail sales@ayalalandpremier.com or visit www.theresidencesatgreenbelt.com. Sales units are available for viewing at the 3rd level, Greenbelt 5.

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Playful travel companions

The company that has accompanied stylish travelers for more than 160 years has designed cases for the favorite games of travelers. Now with a collection of six games—chess, draughts, backgammon, cards, dice and dominoes—Louis Vuitton applies its creativity not only to the cases but also to the contents, elevating popular pastimes to heights of elegance with precious materials and exquisite craftsmanship. The game of the game and the pictogram are bold red, while said yellow are found on each case, while inside, precisely stowed in compartments lined with red microfibre, are all the essential elements of play.

Available by order through Louis Vuitton (Philippines), tel. 8894430. Visit www.louisvuitton.com

Power to the people

Today is the last day of the big sale to mark the opening of the newest Power Mac Center flagship store in Greenbelt 3. Everything Mac is going at 20 percent off.

So we grab the opportunity and head there and check out the iMacs, Mac Minis and Mac-Books, plus all the sleek accessories—docks, speakers, displays, keyboards, headphones and more. The 20 percent discount can be availed for cash purchases of up to P100,000 per transaction while a 13 percent discount is offered for credit card transactions.

Power Mac Center also offers free delivery in Metro Manila of Apple products for purchases ranging from P100,000 and above up to Dec. 24.

The new Power Mac Center flagship store is at 2/F Greenbelt 3, Ayala Center, Makati. Other branches are in SM Megamall, Power Plant Mall, SMCity North Edsa and the SM Mall of Asia.

Ultra edition

Samsung's Ultra Edition sets are incredibly slim figures that "ooh-ah" for mobile phones. Choose from the sleek series of Ultra Edition 6.9 (U600), the Ultra Edition 5.9 (U600) and the Ultra Edition 12 5.4 (U600). Samsung's new-style- and technology-forward mobile phones.

Samsung takes "mobile communications" to a whole new level with a vision of art and technology. The Ultra Editions demonstrate Samsung's vision for the future of mobile communications in terms of technology and design. The Ultra Edition 6.9 (U600) leads the handset pack, boasting the world's thinnest profile of only 6.9 mm. The Ultra Edition 5.9 (U600) is a brand-new clamshell handset that is 5.9 mm thin. And topping off the Ultra Edition line is the "12 in 1" (U600). The world's slimmest slider with a depth of only 12.9mm and a picture-perfect 3-megapixel camera.

Doubly elegant

The icon of the logo as an ornamental element of design is evident, among other things, also in the 1940s when Bulgari introduced the double logo engraved on the bezel. This classic watch has been enhanced with even more detailed finishings. All new models of the watch shown also are endowed with more detailed finishings. New bracelets are laser-treated with either satin or polished treatment. The Bulgari Viola in 41.1, Scrondell 4, Bellavi, Roman, Metal)

Camera ready

For the photography enthusiast, give a digital snooper called the Sony Cyber-shot T-09. This one is equipped with lens that provides close-up shots of subjects in both movie and photo mode up to three times in greater details.

Available in black, silver and red, the 7.2-megapixel Cyber-shot T-09 employs the unique and flexible Al functions for easy focusing on subjects before capture with just a tap on the screen. It maximizes the clarity image capture that prevents blur and images caused by both user's hand movements and subjects in motion and the appliance also to movie recording.

This camera's high stamina provides long period of fun shooting without recharging for a full day, taking approximately 400 images.

Sony products are available on all Sony Spaces, Digital Solutions Plazas, and selected dealer's outlets. Call 818-1800 or 0941-8019900, e-mail info_cpph@ap.sony.com, or visit www.sony.com.ph.

Health and art in one package

Give healthful gifts this season and pass them in a work of art.

Healthy Options has gift boxes and bags with this theme "The Art of Giving" by watercolorist Edge Doctor. The painting is on the single bottle wine bag, small and large gift bags and the Organic Harvest, the Healthy Options version of a traditional gift basket.

Shoppers can get a free art calendar for a minimum purchase of P2,000. Aside from Doctor's painting, the calendar features living observation based on the artist's friends and lovers' favorite coffee beans some from the range are ideal, of course, for java addicts but will please tea and cocoa drinkers as well.

Each mugs big 300-ml capacity allows for satisfying servings of a favorite beverage. Available in four colorful designs: Cafe Du Lait, Cafe Ole Vida, Cafe Fiorentino, and Cafe Del Rey, each has a matching cover that doubles as coaster to prevent moisture from ruining the table surface.

Besides looking good, these mugs are heat and cold-resistant, shock-proof, freezer-safe, and dishwasher-safe. They are made of non-toxic food-grade material and have an added thickness for greater stability.

To order, contact your nearest Tupperware distributor or call 8864021, or visit www.tupperware.com.ph.

From the art

Ceramic artist Lisette Elianne Fernando has created a limited-edition vase for the Creative Happenstax Artists by Making (Cities) titled "Akadiwi Nanay."

When pouring or storing an "Akadiwi Nanay" vase, you become part of a process that's in itself a work of art. Each piece, also known as the "Akadiwi Nanay" vase, you become part of a process that's in itself a work of art. Each piece, also known as the son and friend of a mother. Coles provides shelter for abandoned homeless and abused young girls.

Lisette is well recognized for her accomplishments in ceramic pottery. She runs the Lisette Elianne Fernando Pottery Studio and the Crescent Moon Cafe in Antipolo. Her unique dinnerware and other home accessories are many homes, restaurants, resorts and lifestyle establishments. She is also owner of Pottery Challenge, a hobby school for the arts and crafts.

Lisette has put a Filipino touch on the Critic vase by embossing a traditional embroidered pila clothes design as a symbol of the special, caring qualities of the Filipina mother.

From food to aquarium

The new Tiny Planet Shop and Tiny Kitchen School offer locally made items as gifts. They include scents and candles, placemats and napkins, plastic mice for stationery and utensils.

Also available are original wreaths and miniature decor for pet cages.

From the Tiny Kitchen Cooking School comes gift sets for children like aprons, pot holders and miniature cookie cutters.

The shop and school are at C1-A Food Tribes, Bonifacio City. Call 8 6557 9, 894 6 44 84606 and 899 8 / 5925 25.

JOY TOYS

(left) my Scene Bling Bling girls Barbie, Midge, Madison and Chelsea are ready to party. (Below left) Polly Pocket makes a celebrity entrance with the Hollywood Limousine. Available at SM malls, Toy Kingdom and all leading department stores nationwide.

Silver season

ALTA AY

FRANZOSISCH-RIEE, underplate

By Ana Y Vergara

SINCE THE HOLIDAY SEASON IS synonymous to parties, it's quite common for Filipino families to bring out their most expensive silverware—the crème of the crop. After washing the teeth inexpensive flatware for the longest time, expect them to dine in style if only on Christmas and New Year's Eve as they try to impress guests.

They seldom use their silverware in the microwave oven that tying it often would harass its metal machines. Dollar scarcity, said Ulrich Ackermann, director of Robbe & Berking, silver gets tarnished when not in use.

"Silver in the air reacts with silver," he explained. "Over time, it turns yellow or brown when not in use."

Ackermann was in Manila recently as part of his Asian tour to promote Robbe & Berking, famed in Flensburg, Germany (the company has been producing premium silver and silver-plated cutlery and table accessories for 132 years now).

The brand's top clients include such brand choice and exalted heads as Otto Carbon, Rudolph Kral Brunnen, MS Europa, Bradford, Seahorse Pride and Seahorse Spirit, among others. It also grows a good number of blue-blooded royal customers all over the world. It's exclusively sold locally at Rustan's.

Ackermann was surprised to find out that not a few Filipinos put off using their fine cutlery until they have "special" guests. As far as wear and tear is concerned, he said, it doesn't pay to lose sleep over a few minor scratches for they add character to any silver utensil.

"Silverware is such a pleasure to use," he said.

Silverware gets tarnished when not in use, says Ulrich Ackermann, director of premium German cutlery brand Robbe & Berking

ALTA CHIPPINDALE

"It makes your every meal special. Why only use it three to five times a year when you can use it every single day?"

At the same time, however, he cautioned homemakers from using Gourds Brite, steel wool or any abrasive cleaning agent on their silverware.

Dishwasher-safe

Robbe & Berking products, he assured, are dishwasher-safe. No dishwasher? Microwave it soft sponge, plain dishwashing liquid and lots of water will do the project so nicely.

If you still can't bear the thought of using your precious silverware on food other than fish, Angus beef, quiche and caviar, there's another way to maximize its luster while you wait for that red-letter day.

Robbe & Berking sells special anti-tarnishing pouches that can each easily fit around 12 pieces of silverware. Made of cotton, each pouch comes with a bottle of anti-tarnishing liquid to wash off unsightly stains.

For the longest time, the family-owned company (head-hunted Heinz Berking belongs to the fifth generation of the business in Germany). It was only in the 1960s when it started exporting to Russia, the rest of Europe, North America, the Middle East and finally Asia.

"We had to postpone our Asian expansion (as) we were able to figure out how to position our product. In a region where chopsticks are still widely used," said Ackermann.

At one point, it found itself competing with close to 70 competitors in Germany alone. With the advent of outsourcing, said Ackermann, almost all its rivals have transferred to other countries, particularly Brazil and China, except Robbe & Berking.

"We don't outsource," he said, "not even a single spoon. We'd rather do everything in Germany to ensure that the product's quality doesn't suffer. Most of our workers learned their skills from their fathers, grandfathers and great grandfathers."

Despite having been around for generations, the brand has only a little over a dozen silverware designs to offer. These include avant-Dutchman, turtle Mantle, minimalist Alta and iconic Arc lines, among others.

Unlike most brands, said Ackermann, people at Robbe & Berking are to it that the company's designs are different from one another. "From the handle down to the blade." Not a single item is interchangeable. Since it's not a one-size-fits-all approach, the company has had to learn to serve diverse tastes to cater to specific styles.

It goes without saying that one has to pay a premium to get her hands on a set of Robbe & Berking. A starter set, which consists of a five-piece setting for six people (knife, fork, spoon, teaspoon and salad fork), costs around 2,000 euros or P150,000.

"What's a few more euros to acquire good taste?" said Ackermann. "What Mercedes, Siemens, Carrier and Rhein Haus are doing to their respective businesses, we're doing for the silverware market."

E-mail the author at avergara@inquirer.com.ph

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Sunday LIFESTYLE

Milestones

We welcome announcements of weddings and engagements. Submit names of engaged couple, names of parents, date and place of wedding, and group designer along with a photo of the couple and a sketch of the bridal gown, if any, to the Features, PO Box 2353 Makati Central Post Office 1261 Makati City. E-mail to lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph. A photo of the bride and groom is required. If the wedding has already taken place, announcements will be printed depending on space availability and in no particular order.

LUNA-VILLALÓN

Anthony Jay Villalón, son of Alexander St. and Noelle Jean dela Sena Villalón, will wed Althea Emilia Lucas, daughter of Raul and Edna Vasquez Lucas, Inc. 7 at the Chapel of Transfiguration, Calamagui, Batulao, Nasugbu, Batangas. Reception will follow at Ma'dan Hall in Calamagui. Ding Blanquera designed the bridal gown.

TAN-JAVIER

Luis Tan Jr., son of Luis Ong Tan Sr. and Elsie Arevalo (deceased) will wed Jeanette E. Javier, daughter of Rev. Plaridanes Jr. and Aurea Mae Javier, Dec. 21 at Fernwood Gardens, QC.

PINEDA-RILLO

Alexander Pineda, son of Justice Eraño secretary Ernesto and Virginia Pineda, will wed Belmonte Rillo, daughter of engineer Reynaldo and Dr. Marita Rillo, Dec. 23 6:30, James the Great Parish, ayala alabang Village, Muntinlupa City. Reception will follow at Bellevue Hotel, Alabang City

LIM-PEQUET

Edward Lim, son of Lim Tiaoxin Sr. and Lim Siok Hue Ally, exchanged vows recently with Sherry Ann Pequet, daughter of Oscar and Susan Pequet, at the Shrine of Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life in Reclamation Area, Pasay City. Reception was held at the Grand Ballroom, Century Park Sheraton Hotel.

GARCIA-GAHBAY

Dong S. Garcia, son of Edgardo Jr. (deceased) and Belen Garcia, will wed Anil F. Gahbay, daughter of Daniel and Aurora Gahbay, at 4 p.m., Dec. 20, at the Santuario de San Jose, Greenhills, San Juan. Reception will follow at Crowne Plaza Galleria Manila.

JOHNSON-BAETHONAN

Mitchell Johnson, son of Yvonne Elaine Johnson, will wed Michelle Baethonan, daughter of Melecia Pasco Baethonan, Dec. 29 at St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Ma-a Road, Davao City. The bride will wear a gown designed by Rose Sevilla. Reception will follow at the Davao Convention and Trade Center.

AVANCEÑA-ZAMORA

Antonio Salcedo Jr., son of Antonio Sr. and Velinda Avanceña, will marry Glenda Esmeria, daughter of engineer Silverio A. and Dr. Gaelen Jane Pascual Esmeria, at 4 a.m., Dec. 31, at Transfiguration Chapel, Calamagui, Nasugbu, Batangas. Reception will follow at Nasugbu Garden Al-fresco, Caribe. The bride will wear a Jerry Smallwood creation.

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Josephine Barang

Gifts of shoe shine boxes

THE AUTHOR (center) receives a plaque of appreciation from Fr. Dionne Caron and Hilda Lopez for serving as anchor on the Radio Veritas program "Tanto Papalino."

BETTY Rosse-Chua of Rosary for Life Philippines flanked by book author Edgar de Vera and Fr. James Reuter

AFTER TRAINING FOR three months, 22 poor boys aged 13-15 are going to get shoe shine boxes on Jan. 7 at the heights of Columbus headquarters on Bonifacio Aquino Street, BF Homes, Parañaque.

They were taught by Tony Medina, a director of K of C and president of the Buklod theater and Shining Times Inc.

Every Saturday for five months, the boys would go to Our Lord of the Resurrection Parish and learn the rudiments of shining shoes and several catechism classes of the Legion of Mary.

Last Dec. 9, during the 11 a.m. Mass, the boys were among the 110 boys and girls who took their First Communion. Sounding like a father to all of them, Tony happily told me that the boys looked good in their white T-shirts and black pants.

Now they know more about Jesus, according to Tony who said the best Christmas adults could give them was to teach them how to earn a living by shining shoes.

When. I asked Tony how he knew how to shine shoes, he told me that, growing up poor in Manaoag, he shined shoes when he was not in school.

Supreme Court Justice Leo Quisumbing will attend the awarding of shoe shine boxes. He was the inspiration for the St. Tarcisius Shoe Shine Boys project.

The K of C, Legion of Mary and Buklod Shoeshining Times, Inc. will provide the boxes, uniforms and shoes. Lawyer Joel Estrella also contributed to the project.

Why St. Tarcisius? The young saint was martyred by pagan soldiers at 14 when he protected the Holy Host inside the consecrated. Tony says it will truly be a memorable Christmas for the kids when they receive their shoe shine boxes.

Grand Knight Feliciano Agcaoili and past Gk Max Lawengco will lead in the awarding. The new officers took over Oct. 20.

What does K of C do?

In every parish, the K of C is tasked to defend the Catholic Church. Tony says, in the Resurrection Parish, the K of C holds values formation seminars and retreats and campaigns against drug abuse among the young.

K of C is fraternal and benevolent society of Catholic men founded in New Haven, Connecticut in 1882.

It is now established in every state and territory of the United States; its sister province of Canada; in Strasbourg, Basel, the Philippines; and other countries.

Centennial

The Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (CICM) began its year-long Centennial Celebration in November.

Simultaneous activities were held in the CICM Provincial House in New Manila, QC, and in CICM schools: Ateneo, Mary University, Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya; St. Louis University, Baguio City; University of St. Louis, Tuguegarao, Cagayan; St. Louis College, San Fernando, La Union; and St. Louis School, Mandaue, Cebu, as well as other CICM missions in mission territories.

The theme of the CICM-RP Centennial celebration is "100 Years of CICM Missionary Presence in the Philippines: Remembrance and Revitalization."

Through the celebration, the CICMers hope to make more people aware of the order. It also wants to express its gratitude to people and communities for the opportunity to do mission, particularly missionary spirituality among CICM and mission partners, invariably and renew mindset and evangelize animation and shape a dynamic future direction for CICM in the Philippines.

Until the CICM Provincial House at 7324302, 7259932, 4308510 and 4349373.

Pain management

DR. Bernard R. Gitnic (UST Medicine Class 1991), a staff physician and Continuing Medical Education (CME) director of the Institute of Pain Management in Florida, United States was guest speaker and lecturer in the recent First Congress of the Association of Southeast Asian Pain Societies at the Sofitel Philippine Plaza.

He is the son of Ben P. Gatchalian of the Rotary Club of Metro Sta. Mesa/Buenta 3780.

Dr. Gatchalian, former director of the Pain Management Center of St. Luke's Medical Center, QC, spoke on "Cancer Pain Management: "Time to Revise the WHO Ladder." He also conducted a workshop on "Interventional Pain Management for Low Back Pain."

He has a subspecialty Certification in Pain Medicine from the American Board of Anesthesiology.

Holy Rosary book

Fr. James Reuter, SJ, celebrated a beautiful and solemn Mass during the launch on the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe of the book "Mysteries of Salvation: Rosary" by Edgar de Vera at the Manila Hyatt Hotel.

Fr. Reuter said Dr. Ave took the responsibility of spreading the word of God through his books that were being published by Ecumen Studentes. Dr. Vera's books, according to Fr. Reuter, were bridges from soul to soul.

During the ceremonial ribbon with Fr. Reuter was Betty Rosse-Chua, promoter of Rosary for Life Philippines, Office; sponsors were Mona Lacsamana of Eucharistic Adorers' league and Gabriela de la Inmaculada Conception, through Aurora Kintanar.

Present was Henry Go of Totes Bookstore who promised to make available good books by Catholic authors. The book is available at Totes, 2/F, Red Ribbon Bldg., Connecticut St., Greenhills.

Radio program

After airing the program "Sino si Papalino, Sanyong Madaling Lapitan" on Radio Veritas every third Tuesday of the month for the past eight months, the buddy of Fr. Papalino was released that the show was now ruled No. 6.

The program, which has been named "Buddy on the air" by Fr. Dionne Caron, is anchored by yours truly and co-hosted by Divina Poblete or Fe Cruz Bautista. It invites devotees who have been helped miraculously by Fr. Papalino. Next program is at 7:30 p.m., Dec. 19, on 909 am Radio Veritas.

Sydney on the beaten track

Sunday LIFESTYLE Travel

There's more to the Australian city than parasailing over Sydney Harbor

Text and photos by Angelina G. Gulay
Contributor

"YOU CAN DO IT, MA!" shouted my rah-rah girl as the straps and clips of a harness sealed my fate, in full view of three other pairs of "parasailors," all yuppies like her. Thus, did I start to "enjoy" my daughter's surprise Christmas present: tandem parasailing over Sydney Harbor. Being the only oldie on the boat (to my daughter's obvious glee!), I felt like a sideshow.

If I managed to do as required, that is, "relax, enjoy the view," it was because, for her sake, I rallied it. I must even gamer for a couple of minutes. All things considered, the thrill of the 10-minute daredevil ride was not totally lost on me.

My daughter, a geologist, lives and works in Sydney's North Shore suburbs, about three kilometers from the central business district on the opposite end of the Sydney Harbor Bridge. From her apartment in Cammeray, she walks 10-15 minutes to her office in North Sydney. Good exercise via Miller Street, the main thoroughfare that connects the street where she lives.

Some afternoons, I'd take a bus to the city, where my daughter would meet me after work, or I'd pass by her office and we'd take the train to the city. Just following the locals' modus became interesting walks.

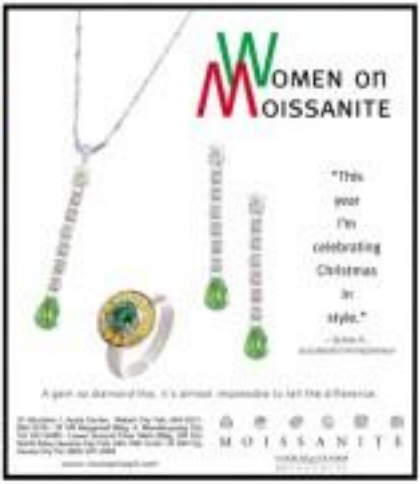
On my next visit, I did commune again to a bit of height, though: We crossed the Sydney Harbor Bridge, which took us to parasailing vibration.

No, we didn't do the (walk-on-the-arch) Bridge Climb! We went for a stroll on the pedestrian lane, from the North Shore to the city. Locals take about 20 minutes, but we took our time, starting off at Milsons Point, where the massive concrete roadway leading to the bridge is located.

The 74-year-old bridge is the world's largest steel arch bridge, the arch's peak rising 134 meters above the harbor (140 meters on hot days when the steel expands).

It is not the longest, but it is the widest, with eight lanes for motor traffic, plus two railway tracks, a bicycle lane and two pedestrian lanes on each side, both fenced off from vehicles.

SYDNEY Harbor Bridge and Sydney Opera House within touching distance from Milsons Point in the North Shore



Sydney on the beaten track

MOTHER-DAUGHTER bonding: Jill assists in the air. Photo was taken from the boat by another parasailer wanting his own.

UNDER the famed bridge on the Milsons Point side

Photograph #1

We took the lane on the eastern side, with a novel view of the other famous Australian icons, the Sydney Opera House jutting out to the Port waters below.

Descending the bridge stairway on the city end, we emerged to The Rocks, the city's historic section, referred to as the birthplace of Australia.

Tour

I began my Miller Street "tour" on the street corner, where stands the Cammeray number, which gives the Aboriginal origin of the suburb's name, Cammeraygal.

About two blocks up the street is St. Leonard's Park, the 40 acre corner of urban heaven, the suburb of North Sydney Oval, a rugby league venue.

Some of the sport's local stars are graduates of the Catholic high school for boys across the street, Marist College North Shore. Three other schools located on Miller Street are North Sydney Boys High School, Pacanna School and stress Saint Angela College, a Catholic high school for girls.

Conveniently situated for students is Stanton Library, the central library of the North Sydney Council local government area. It houses the North Sydney Heritage Centre, and is also the best local history resources in the state of New South Wales.

Next to the library is the civic park of the North Sydney Community Centre, where arts and crafts and fresh produce markets are held monthly. At the park entrance is the 1897 Queen Victoria Jubilee Fountain, built to celebrate of the 60th anniversary of the monarch's ascendance to the throne. Cities across Commonwealth nations erected their own commemorative fountains.)

Much of Miller Street, from St. Leonard's Park all the way to the CBD, is lined with trees, conveniently shading pedestrians' way, although making the undulant street sweeps seem double time, especially on evening dog-walks.

Like border townships on fine estates, the leaves enhance the picture postcards of handsome buildings like the North Sydney Council Chambers and St. Mary's Church, which is said to be a more vast when it opened in 1935.

The Independent Theatre, however, stands out because of its unusual stucco-tooth gets for quite its history it turned out, is pure as-it-is-laid. Originally a town station in the 1880s, the site became a vaudeville house, a munitions factory and a skating rink, among other hobbies.

In 1939, it was taken over by The Independent amateur theater company of the late Essie Denis Hume, an Australian actor and theater director born — would you believe — in Manila. She staged mostly children's theater and school programs, making the theater a training ground for young Australian actors and playwrights, until it closed in 1977.

Thanks to private benefactions, it reopened in 1998. Three days it is a venue for "Coffee Concerts," mini-hour intimate musical performances, preceded by morning tea.

At the end of my daughter's office block, Miller Street intersects the Pacific Highway, which leads to the Sydney Harbour Bridge, and Mount Street. On the corner is the North Sydney Post Office and further down is Mary MacKillop Place, the chapel's museum memorial to the first Australian saint.

Since the day it became certain that my daughter would be working in North Sydney, I have been surfing the Net and consciously reading up on the place, as well as practically every city and metro information and beyond where the geocoo field went.

Now every piece of news or photo from her, via SMS, IM, e-mail, transports me to her side. So, my first visit with her was like a dream come true. It's a memory I will replay in my mind every now and then and wouldn't mind reliving ... well, OK, maybe except the high-flying stunt.

MORNING scene on Miller Street

SHADY sidewalk outside Monte Sant' Angelo School on Miller Street

INDEPENDENT Theater was established by Australian thespian born in Manila

Cebu goes to Manila

THREE CEBU-RELATED events in quick succession brought me to Manila.

One was the impressive piano recital of Rudolf Gaber at the Little Theater of the Cultural Center of the Philippines. The performance was part of the CCP's Filipinas Series lineup.

The virtuoso's sophomore did not disappoint the record audience. Welcoming guests and the general public was Rudolf's glamorous mom, the Rudolfo's "Oche" Pelaez Cuden of Cagayan de Oro and Cebu. Also present were Rudolf's younger brother Alain and his proxy-wife Sharon.

Very much in evidence was Mrs. Rudolfo "Rudy" Villanueva, Cebu's music genius in residence. He is also a prolific writer; Magellan's Rudy was commissioned by the Gaber family to compose a Sonata for the recital.

I had the luck as an Iberia Magellan's Rudy who relished every note Rudolf played, not just his compositions. One moment he whispered, "It is a performance like this that restores one's faith in humankind."

Other works magnificently rendered by Rudolf were Beethoven's E-Flat Major by Mozart; Beethoven's Sonata in F-Minor Major (also known as Appassionata); Stravinsky of the Devil by Liszt; and Liszt's Sonata in B-Minor, the finale. The last scene of the curtain rolls.

After the recital, Rudolf and his mom flew to Greece for a piano competition; after that, Vienna, where they caught a series of events that open the annual pre-Winter Music season.

Monique's show

My next trip to Manila was for a weekend at the Makati Shangri-La Hotel for the Monique Lhuillier fashion gala. Most of the Cebu beauties stayed there, splendidly received by the new GM, Greg Dugan—his wife Jocelyn Ebora is a Shangri-Lan, and Joy Whatmore, director for communications.

Cebu is immensely proud of Monique. In every interview she says she was born in Cebu and learned about graciousness and style from her parents Michel and Amparito Lhuillier, but might add, her grandparents at well...the late Benny and Angela Gothongkar.

The night before the grand event, Michel and Amparito hosted an elegant dinner at the Shangri-La's Shang Palace for family members and Cebuanos who flew to Manila for the occasion. Among them were Gov. Gwen Garcia and Cebu City Vice Mayor Michael Rama. Mayor Tommy and Margot Osmeña received the next evening.

There were much applause when Monique bounced in after the rehearsal, with husband Tom Hughes and their son Jack Nicholas in the arms of Tom's mom, Dora Hughes. Monique wore from table to table kissing and embracing brothers, sister, aunts and close friends.

When the whole Manila affair was over, Monique and Tom, with their baby, came to Cebu for a breather. And to spend precious time with her maternal grandmother, Delia Silos Llaneza, who lives here with daughter Anna Maria and Anthony Rodriguez.

It was a chance for Monique to visit the tomb of her adoptive brother, who passed away in September.

Peronia Zobel

The third visit to Manila was for a book launch at the Ayala Museum under the aegis of Evangelina Padilla y Zobel Dee, Dr. Luis Mar Cardenal who came from Madrid for the purpose.

The book "El Viaje de Peronia Zobel" is all about the coveted literary prize for excellent literature in Spanish by Filipino authors.

Author of the book is professor Lourdes Sellanes whose memoire was described by her as entered the Peronia Zobel in 1998 and shortly after wrote a book in Spanish about the prize. There was a demand for an English version.

In her speech, Dr. Sellanes said the came across more source of and a wealth of information to expose to ignore. Their acceptance of the book may be why it has taken more time to publish than expected.

Some Cebuanos have received the Peronia Zobel. Another past winner was Bienvenido Noriel, an uncle of mine, who wrote just as well in English and Cebuano as he did in Spanish. My wife and I were happy to be there for the occasion.

Also from Cebu were Napoleon Rama who got the prize in 1992, Rep. Raul del Mar whose father Don Jose Maria del Mar won the 1960 award winner, and Ana Maria Manguerra and Victoria Manguerra Morallia, granddaughters of Sen. Mariano Jesus Cuenco. When Cuenco was the Senate president, he authored the law requiring the teaching of 24 units of Spanish in all colleges and universities of the Philippines.

During the program emceed by Maribel Ortigas, eloquent speeches were delivered by Spanish Ambassador Ignacio Ingate and the Philippine Ambassador to Madrid Joseph Bernardo.

Most charming language is one I came from the heart and with quick Spanish wit, was that of the book's publisher, Georgina. She gave a glimpse of her family's life in what seemed like a fifties past.

Peronia Zobel was instituted in 1928 by her grandfather Don Enrique Zobel de Ayala.

Georgina's mother, Delfin Gloria Zobel, and her father, Don Bienvenido Padilla, kept the award's torch burning, passing it on to children Georgina and Alejandro. Now who is going to give them, specially Georgina, a prize?

Those who get a copy of the book cannot put it down. It is available at the Ayala Museum, Filipinas Heritage Library and other outlets in Metro Manila.

It will be available in Cebu soon. Readers of PDI's sister paper, the Cebu Daily News, will be duly informed. How about a Cebu launch? That will have to be in May, says Georgina who is all set to leave and spend Christmas in Madrid. Amigos de Espana con Cebu, whose president is Amparito Lhuillier, will definitely prepare for it.

PAWEST: Rudolf Gaber

FAMILY picture. From left: Michel Lhuillier, Cebu City Vice Mayor Mike Rama, Cebu Governor Gwen Garcia, Monique and Tom Hughes, Amparito Lhuillier, Dora Hughes with Jack Nicholas

TRAVEL BRIEFS

Miles program has treat for online bookers

Skyworld members will enjoy savings of 30 percent off select fare levels on Internet-issued ticket sold on before Feb. 28, 2007, on some economy seats. Providing the benefit of redeeming Miles from home or office, the online booking facility also enables travelers to check real-time flight status, select meal preferences, request visas, choose preferred equipment and ticket delivery method, as well as customize their trip using a wide host of additional travel preference options. The offer is open to all Skyworld members flying to Emirates' destinations and cannot be combined with any other ongoing reduced rate/discount offers. Skyworld, the frequent flyer program of Emirates and Sri Lankan, offers three tiers of membership—Blue, Silver and Gold—with each membership tier providing access to privileges. Gold and Silver members are entitled to avail first priority for all classes of travel, priority check-in and airport lounge access. Members can Skyworld to Miles, one Skyworld Mile for every mile they fly on Emirates, Sri Lankan or partner airlines, or miles they earn the program's designated hotels, car rentals, financial, leisure and lifestyle partners.

Skyworld Miles can be redeemed for a wide range of rewards, including free tickets on Emirates or Sri Lankan and other Skyworld partner airlines, flight upgrades, hotel accommodation, accessories and exclusive shopping.

New Year promo

Sofitel Philippine Plaza Manila offers a New Year Countdown magic promotion. People who will book deluxe and Club Sofitel rooms Dec. 27–Jan. 1 get the third night free. Two kids 12 years and below stay for free and get complimentary one-hour use of the Plaza Kids Club. The package also includes buffet breakfast for two at Spiral and complimentary use of the 24-hour Sofitel Spirit Club and Spa. Advance reservations required. Rooms are subject to availability. The offer is not applicable with other promotional programs, packages, group rates or meeting and convention packages.

Get 'high' this season

If you want to get away from the hustle and bustle of the holidays without traveling long distances, try the Seven Suites Hotel Chez' valley on Sumulong Highway, Antipolo City. Amid the scenic and climate of Mar Pear's breezes, displays in Metro Manila by enjoying it into a division.

Seven Suites has ample parking space, its multipurpose hall, entertainment facilities, can accommodate over 200 people and is a suitable venue for parties and other activities.

Seven Suites Hotel Observatory is at Sumulong Highway. For reservations, call (632) 696-6666, 6822919 or 0908-867-4444, or e-mail reservations@sevensuites.com.

Boracay hotel undergoes makeover

Henry Gaisano, chair and president of the Boracay Regency Beach Resort and Convention Center, has announced ongoing projects to improve the place's facilities and services.

He said this was in line with the resort's continuing effort to ensure that guests' experience is "one luxury" during their stay.

Boracay's first underground beach shuttle, Wave, is now being renovated and is expected to reopen this month.

Now called Mid Wave, it will be run by MID Management Group of Subic. New additions include an open-air area for al fresco dining and partying, the new After's Bar and additional KTV rooms for visitors here. It suffer stay is also being built.

The Boracay Regency Garden Wing will be finished by December. With an Asian tropical motif, it will have 86 units, including 18 suites with direct access to a swimming pool.

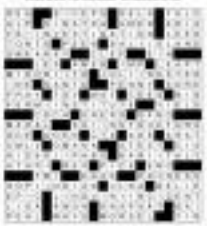
The Boracay Regency Lagoon is a 120-room structure with water as centerpiece. All rooms are expected to open up to a swimming pool. Regency is the first hotel to get a triple A rating in the whole white beach area and has Bonifacio beach front. Call 633 5334.

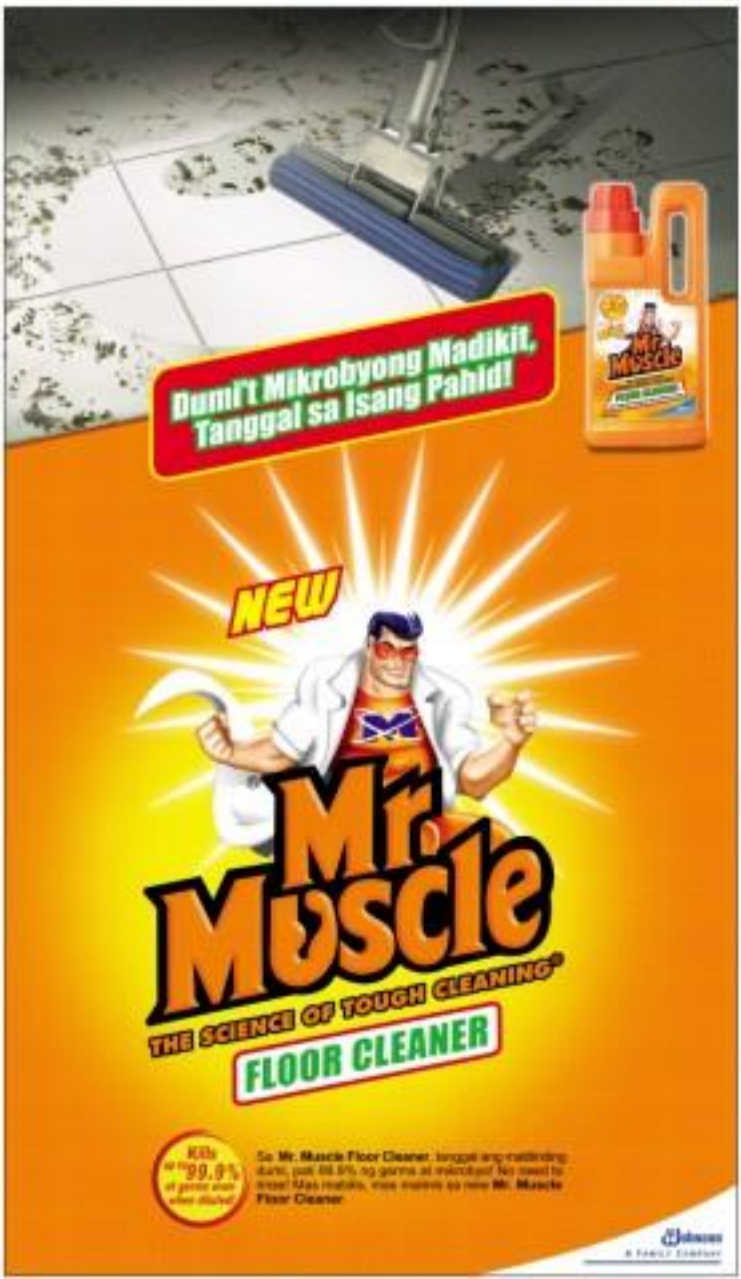
EXPERIENCE "divine luxury" at Boracay Regency.

MACAU GETS MORE FILIPINO TOURISTS

Macau's tourist arrivals reached 20 million this year. Director Joao Manuel Costa Antunes of the Macau Government Tourist Office said China remained the largest source market, accounting for nearly 34 percent of arrivals. Aside from China, Macau's top 10 tourist markets are Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Korea, United States, Singapore and Thailand. From January to October this year, over 139,000 Filipinos visited Macau, a 90 percent increase over figures for the same period last year. The Macau Government Tourist Office in the Philippines is at 11 Valero Tower, 122 Valero St., Salcedo Village, Makati; tel. 81-23101 and 81-28941. E-mail: mgtopkh@info.com.ph.

ANSWER TO SUNDAY CROSSWORD

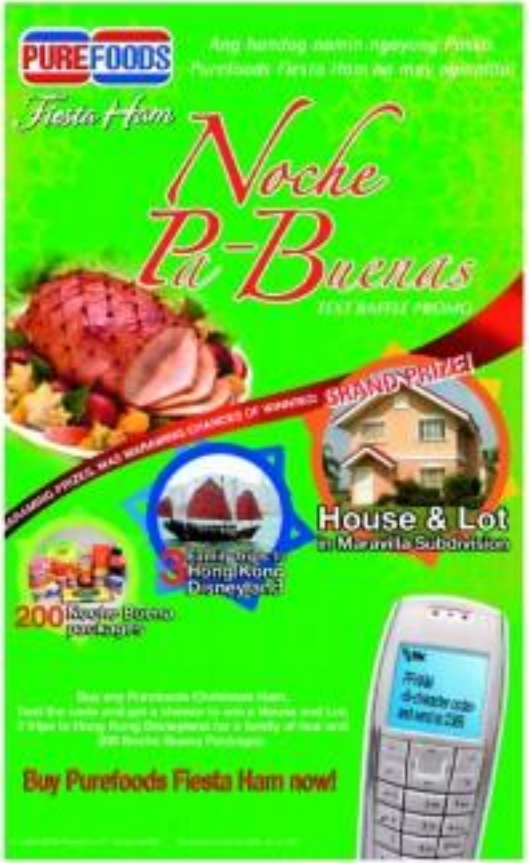




Program raises US$1.28M for Unicef

"CRANKIE FOR GOOD," THE 18-flight fundraising program of Cathay Pacific and the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef), has collected US$1.28 million in 2005-2006.

The program asks Cathay Pacific passengers to donate spare change to any currency. The money is used by Unicef for various projects in different countries. It will also go to the airline's Wheelchair Bank, a foundation for children with neuromuscular disease. Cathay Pacific promoted "Change for Good" with Unicef in 1981. Over the past 25 years, it has raised almost US$9.3 million.



EMILY'S POST
Emily A. Marcelo

Happy but confused wife

DEAR EMILY,

This letter is coming to you from the Middle East—from one happy but confused wife.

My husband started working here in April, and my two children (aged six and two) followed him in July. He's an engineer and I am a stay-at-home wife.

Everything is fine except that I am starting to have problems with my hands. They feel numb or there is so much pain due to my torn bad arthritis. I should like choose here.

Now I am confused, unable to decide if my kids and I should stay here or go back to the Philippines.

In Dubai, the upside is that my family is intact and we live well. Our apartment and utilities are free and my children go to the best schools. The downside is we're cooped up inside our little world with no place for socializing (the restaurants or for relaxing and shopping as to malls. And everything is expensive.

My husband hardly sees day off, on Friday, and he prefers to spend it resting and sleeping.

I am bored and scared and worried that my husband won't be able to keep this good job because, despite his yearly contract, he would be at the mercy of his employers.

I want to go back home. The upside is I can have help in the house, save enough money to build our house, work part-time and be able to talk to my friends whenever I want to. The downside is my fear of dengue and of the supposed "food" my husband. What if something happens to him?

And what about my life... the pain I have in my hands? I am an engineer myself but I feel that my life and very self are gone. I am tired of doing things over and over again.

I sometimes regret I didn't have a career considering that I finished engineering and even passed the board exams for boothers. I am creative and could make beaded wallets and bags. My plans are to put up my own restaurant or open a gift shop when I have the money.

Am I being selfish by having these thoughts? I love my family so much but I should love myself, too, right?

TROUBLED WIFE

There's a saying it's hard to put a good man down. And a good woman, too!

You're intelligent, creative and have much to offer—the reason you're bored and unhappy with your life in Dubai. You're also undergoing a mid-life crisis/ homesickness, which needs plenty of time to overcome.

You're also being too hard on yourself. It's been only five months! If you're a baby, you haven't even started to walk yet, to run, to speak.

Here, analyze the urgency of your frustrations. The pain in your hands must be so immediately treated because there is nothing your life unfortunately hellish. There are many alternative medicines for arthritis and you needn't suffer unnecessarily.

Second, accept the fact that life in Dubai, for all its affluence, is entirely a different space from the one here you know at home. They're almost as different as night and day.

Here is your anger if you care about your health. It's been said that the cells in our body are constantly eavesdropping on our thoughts.

Just remember that there will always be tradeoffs in life. You can never have everything at once. Something's got to give—always. Tap your inner resources and be the person you want to be despite the seemingly odd landscape around you...literally and figuratively.

Allow your creativity to break out and blossom despite the boredom that seems to be the order of the day for you.

Forget the "happy times" you remember of home. Memories have a way of distorting reality. They may seem more exciting than they truly are. You and your husband decided to go abroad for your family's future, right? It's always greener on the other side. And you will probably feel that way, too, if you repeat yourselves again.

There'll be no end to your quest for peace and happiness if you don't resolve to make this work. You have to decide that you'll be happy wherever your family is—regardless of whether or not there are facilities for the fun you're accustomed to.

What if you actually decided to come home and discovered to blindsight that Dubai wasn't so bad after all? That the "fun times" you've been offering on reruns in your mind were just a mirage? What then? Remember—hindsight is always 20/20! Make this a true learning experience for you and your family. There's nothing more broadening and breathtaking in scope and experience than travel and living abroad. Open your mind to the wealth of possibilities at your feet. Don't throw it away by moping.

E-mail the author at emarcelo@inquirer.com.ph. Subscribe, lifestyle, or send your letters to inquirer. Listen to Ms. Marcelo on her program "Ms. Heaven Updates," 7:15-8:30 p.m., Monday-Friday, on dzRB 594 AM.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2006 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER G

Story on page G2

EXPORT-QUALITY pieces, characterized by delicate workmanship and fine finishes, at TOUT

PHOTOSHOP! You needn't dress it. Leave it to Blow-up Babies to create extraordinary portraits of your baby—or yours, or your beloved pet's, too—in full production swing, complete with costumes and props. Just pick a theme and they'll handle the rest...

Premium living, specialty shopping

Text by Cheche V. Moral
Photos by Rudel Bonoc

There are several familiar shops in Serendra's lineup, but don't expect to see a motley of the same stores you'll find in, say, its neighbor, Market! Market!

THE FILIPINO'S DAILY HECtic and harried modern lifestyle now demands that everything must be within easy reach of the urban dweller.

Hence, the trend of building malltypes in high-rise homes that include dining and retail outlets literally right on their residents' doorsteps. No leaving the horrendous traffic for that sudden midday vague craving, and no worrisome episodes vying for that parking slot for a late night shopping fix.

The concept for Serendra, Fort Bonifacio High Street, Ayala Land's new development in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, isn't only to provide those living environments to the property's inhabitants, but also to offer an alternative retail experience to other urbanites who share the claustrophobic human traffic in the bigger malls, especially in the turbulent holiday shopping.

There are several familiar shops in Serendra's lineup, but don't expect to see a motley of the same stores you'll find in, say, its neighbor, Market! Market!, also an Ayala-owned mall (Serendra is right across it, by the way).

Apart from a more intimate shopping experience, the property has chosen some specialty shops that can only be found here. Nope, never unique finds.

Now that Serendra is only on its soft opening, shopping will be in full swing by early next year.

Vintage clothing, footwear and accessories can be found in Peppered Cherry. The shop's the showroom of sorts for several young designers who create one-of-a-kind pieces for those hankering for items beyond the conformist mold.

Next door is Maestra, where women sell fine-tailored Asian-inspired fashions—pulled-off variety and beaded wraps-and-skirts—at reasonable prices.

Smack right between these two fashion stores is Tuslia, a lively little nook that has a considered selection of "functional art"—handcrafted jewelry and home accessories.

Owned by the same dynamic behind The Bead Shop, Luna is a showcase of some independent local and international artists. The Californian jeweler Andrea Lee's pieces made from sea glass are shown alongside David Ucori sterling silver creations. Uno, a New Yorker, embeds natural spices and herbs into his resin jewelry. Likewise, there are some quirky leather bags from a Thai designer.

There are also beach-inspired woodcrafts and small furniture from handicrafts, made by a modern and daughter team, and contemporary pottery from Chinese Wueh Hsien Lu. Luna's collections can run up to the five figures.

UNIQUE jewelry, bags and fashion accessories from indie international artists at Luna. Below are one-of-a-kind handcarved wall accents, also from Luna.

Fab lighting fixtures

TOUT (That True Pieces) is the place to go for fabulous lighting fixtures. Owned by a couple involved in the export trade, the store has a wide selection of quality pieces made of top-grade material like abaca, ting-ting and raffia.

Specialty mechanical clocks—floor (grandfather's clock), wall-mounted, stands and table pieces...can be found at Riverside. This store has an impressive selection of tin-veneer clocks, made by the eponymous German company founded in 1922, including its tin-can handmade wooden "cuckoo" clocks. It also has some unique chair sets, ears to be conversation pieces.

Other home accessories can be found at Pharaoh, which has Egyptian rugs and other home accents, and Rimera, a retailer of Indonesian accessories.

According to feng shui, 2007 is the year of the Fire Boar. Shoppers can get advice at World of Feng Shui and purchase so-called "enhancers" to improve their luck in the coming year.

Nearby is A Different Bookstore, for a solid selection of reading materials. This is possibly the bookstore's biggest branch, with rare books offering the latest bestsellers—and with a coffee shop in front.

There are two places in Serendra devoted to kids and kids alone—well, something to keep the little ones busy while Mommy has her nails done at Nail Tropics. There's the play school Gymboree, and right across it is Blow-up Babies. Funny they don't shrink kids here. The latter does the exact opposite.

Blow-up Babies is a unique photo studio specializing in full-production shoots...themes, costumes, props—to make every kid's portrait extra special and memorable. Recently the studio has added photo services for the furkids; the entire family and, why not, the family's beloved doggies and kitties.

For serious art buyers, there are three art galleries in this property—Art Verite, Finale Art and Ivan Gallery—showcasing the works of Philippine visual and literary artists. Ivan's inaugural show, for instance, presented the illustrations of Elmer Borlongan, "The Rocking Horse," based on a story by Filipino national Rocky Gutierrez.

Need more craft for a take-away bowful of goodies? Sans Cupcakes by Sonja? No worries. BPI is just nearby.

THE WORLD-RENOWNED Gymboree play school, for kids aged 0-6, opens its sixth Philippine branch at Serendra.

FOOTWEAR from Peppered Cherry

HANTIK sells a merry mix of Asian-inspired apparel and jewelry.

LOF Gallery's curtain-raiser is Elmer Borlongan's collection of illustrations (above right) based on a story by Palanca-winning writer Rocky Bravo.

PREPARE for the Year of the Fire Boar with a visit to World of Feng Shui.

2006 Bulgari holiday collection

2006 Gucci holiday collection

A luxurious start to the season

2006 Bulgari holiday collection

ORGANIZED A, IN COOPERATION WITH American Express Bank and Ayala Land Premier, submerial to the holiday season with the presentation of fall/winter collections from luxury brands at its lobby.

Models showcased latest items from the holiday collections of Bulgari, Louis Vuitton, Prada, Hugo Boss, Salvatore Ferragamo, Chanel, Bottega Veneta and Tod's, DKNY and Burberry.

The Las Piñas Boys Choir performed popular Christmas tunes.

Hosting the event were Ayala Malls Group vice president and luxury group head Rowena Bautistas and senior division manager Elyssa Fernandez; Ayala Specialties, Inc.'s general manager Elizabeth Quisumbing; division manager-marketing management for Ayala Land Premier/Project Development head of One Serendra, Mckinley Hill, AVP/head of ALP sales Tina Rivera; Greco Lmtpp, cmt marketing head of Amerikano Express Bank; Bulgari's general manager Maria Katipjuk; and Louis Vuitton's Shiva de'shea.

Guests included Tessa Prieto-Valdes and husband Dominic, Anna Isa Sheps, Rosario Orra, Thess Calasang, Ana Stella, Barbara Alcuitas, Cristina Brachos and Mia Bermudez.

2006 Chanel holiday collection

THE VOLKSWAGEN Beetle that shoppers can win

KIDS can use their creativity in the Store Globe Making Contest.

Four ways to win

SHOPWISE hypermarket raises every shopper's chance of winning great surprises four times.

This year, Shopwise goes full circle in spreading holiday cheer to its patrons, to generous four promise to celebrate Christmas.

In the Globe of Good, shoppers have a chance to win a brand-new Volkswagen Beetle. Have yourself photographed with family and friends with The Global Picture and let your kids express their creative side with the Do the Spin Snow Globe Making Contest, an art workshop and competition just for them.

Hit New Year's Eve, save your "spins" and receive sweet treats with the Date the Day promo.

Magnalyn Ong, president Celebrity Heroes said they decided on the circle as promo theme because many Filipinos associated round object with good luck.

She added that circles also made striking visuals and host themselves to rich and varied interpretations.

POWERFUL women Bea Hiro and Jenni Francisco

ELEGANT couple Becky and Chat Velasco

GALIPO divas partners Bernida and Eric Yang

Inspired fashion expert Agatha Abeto-Sudhwani and Pearl's girl Honeylicious

STYLISH ladies Bonnie Santos and Cristina Brobeck

SHOE lovers Dawn Zulueta and Mia Palomeno

Holiday disco fever

Tessa! Tessa Prieto-Valdes

ON THE 12TH DAY OF THE Christmas season, I ushered in the holiday merriment with a swingin' disco-themed party for my dearest family and friends. When I say disco, that means having acid-colored beanbags, lava lamps and disco balls all over the house, and having our Christmas tree embellished with rhinestones, silk flowers and neon ribbons.

This year, aside from our many Christmas lists, my two little girls have their own, smaller but real pine trees. These trees are festooned with their photos and our ornaments from Gifts & Graces, a wonderful organization which promotes livelihood products from remote areas.

In keeping with my efforts to support charitable projects, all guests were asked to bring old clothes for Typhoon Reming victims. It turned out to be a great way to weed out everyone's closets in time for the New Year, as all brought in overwhelming donations that will surely go a long way to help our fellow Filipinos in need.

There are some Christmas seasons where all the merriment seems to be concentrated in a particular place. This year, The Conservatory at the Manila Peninsula seems to be the epicenter of Christmas partying.

The first invitees came from Bobbie and Irene Delgado, founders of International Theatre Group, who moved their annual Christmas party from the Tower Club which the party had outgrown. Every year, this party gets bigger and better and this year was no exception.

As always, the raffle prizes got bigger and better, too, including more airline tickets. The show was headlined by Robert Seña, although one of TEG's staff, Angel Zulalitat of C-Performas, literally stole the show as her duets with Robert highlighted the depth of talent within the multifaceted organization.

DISCO lover party hosted by the Sea Princess

PHOTOGRAPHER Willy Sue

JEWELRY Jewelers' owner Mia Herrera

GLAM lad and pretty ladies Joanna Tan and Dindo Monserrat

MAGGAM hostess Maria Katigbak

KLM's journey

Shock waves came the very next day as The Conservatory was again the venue, this time for the 55th anniversary celebration of KLM. This premier airline's triumphant journey was catalogued in a short historical video that showed how it used to take a whole day to travel from Europe to Asia.

The fabulous event, locally hosted international designer Oliver Tolentino (tel. 897-7899/940) caused a beautiful, flowing gown for me with bejeweled details, which on closer inspection, turned out to be shaped like an airplane!

Sometimes it pays to attend these events, as Air France KLM gave away 55 World Business Class tickets to the intimate crowd. As the oldest international airlines in the world, KLM has constantly increased its market share especially after its merger with Air France.

KLM's history and tradition are not complete without its signature Delft Blue miniature houses. The airline showed off the entire collection, an exhaustive inventory of period styles of Dutch architecture and culture. Three historic Dutch houses are given to World Business Class travelers. Avid collector, included former US President Dwight Eisenhower, who had his very own set displayed on his desk at the White House.

STYLE icons Mona Tantoco, Tina Ocampo and Beng Ong

GLM key movers Bingo Briguera, Tess Zulueta and Joey Laurence

KLM royal family with Air France KLM regional GM Rob Gorial (center)

FAMILY friends Pink Yang, Noji Alindogan, Rico Guillermo, Tess Alindogan with parents Cory and Manny Alindogan

ACCOUNTING wiz Mark SyCip, Ariane GM Ty Kim, TDG CEO Robbie Delgado and family wife, Helen

MODELS Bianca Valeriano and Dronna Cadenas

Incredible shoes

Staying with my earthquake metaphor, Conservatory aftershocks continued with designer Gwen Gregorio's launch of his shoe designs. The main drama was provided by statuesque models wearing the shoes while displayed atop lighted panels. Guests could reminisce the incredible shoes while mingling around during the "Phantom of the Opera"-inspired soiree.

Together with Gwen Gregorio, Maldita sweet Eric and Estrella Teng have opened Gregs Shoe Salon at the Basement Level of The Peninsula. The beauty about customized shoes is the comfort and support provided by each pair. And with Gregs's design, the Francesca becomes a perfect fit of basic and function.

SKY CABLE's Marc Spelmans Mark and Jhoanna So, Roberto Aramico, Vilu Lee, Tess Princess, Ashton Tarroo of Sky Cable and Irene Ramos of Urban Spa

TDG GIRLS Cecille So, Grace Barrameda, Raya Acopio and Donna Perez

DESIGNER Friends at LM Boutique Plaza Tess Feler, Bo Kilit, Art and Pinky Perales

Gift ideas

Since Christmas is now hurtlingly near, I realize that I'm running out of shopping time, what with so many social events crowding my calendar. Here are some gift ideas I wish I had time for.

1. For that very special loved one, jewelry is always much appreciated. Check out the collections at Raphael's at The Shang. Designer/owner Mia Herrera is on one of the finalists in the Gold of Philippine Jewellers Exhibition. She has some outstanding showpieces in previous and current previous seasons.

2. The Asian Hotels and Gaisbuhl 4 hosted a Christmas Shopping Cocktail Party with shops' chefs and a free-flowing buffet chow to entice guests to see the items up close. Bulgari launched its Bulgarishi almost considered eye candy. Husband was even spotted at Bulgari's and, although with a wish to go I am still hopeful.

3. Sky Cable and Urban Spa tied up for an early Christmas session to beat the holiday rush. Pampering treatments are wonderful gifts for stressed-out friends. Located at the Shangri-La Plaza Mall, the spa has a small retail area for last minute surprises for Santa. And gifts a flight away to Bali, enjoy Infinity at Sheraton Nusa Dua and Chido Nyambi for the most relaxing presents ever.

4. For furniture and furnishings, head to LM Furniture Plaza along Aspirus Street in Makati. Multi-talented designer Bo Kilit has recently opened a quaint shop selling unique gifts right next to his shop is Bill Cousins's sister shop with interesting home furnishings made from signature fabrics of capiz, silk and other weaves.

5. For those cute photographs capturing male black-and-white photos by Willy Sue are now on display at the Fabergé Center (across Milky Way Building on Pasay Road). It takes a creative eye to capture those great shots while still promoting the islands of Palawan.

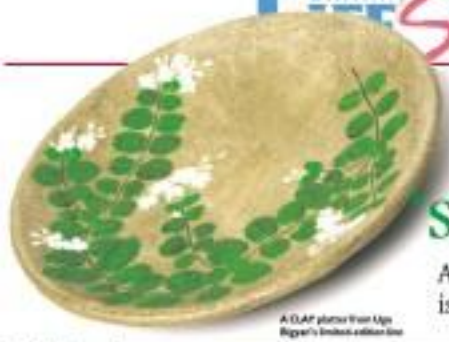
6. For those conscious of their skin but are hesitant to spend a fortune on it, Pond's has developed a new line of skin toners and treatments all containing multifruit. It recently launched these products with a big event—the invites were a wonderful box of chocolates and roses. As the saying goes, history does repeat itself, because, by using Pond's, I have now turned into my mother (who also uses Pond's).

In just eight days, we can all take a pause from all the shopping and socializing and focus on the real meaning of Christmas. I can hardly wait!

E-mail the author at susyntuvera@inquirer.com.ph

SHOE designer Cesar Gaspar and his newest leg models wearing his creations and shoes

Sunday LIFESTYLE Home



A CLAP platter from Ugu Bigyan's limited-edition line

Home is the sampaguita'

A modest national symbol is thrust into the spotlight

ALEXANDRA Romeo, Crossings CEO, and stylist Rocky Cuna

Text by Linda B. Bolido
Photos by Rony Hamilada

JUST AS the Philippines decided not so long ago to make the predatory eagle the national bird instead of the modest mayon, some Filipino plant enthusiasts propose every now and then that the *sampaguita* be changed as Filipino national flower.

After all, if national symbols are supposed to represent a nation's and a people's character and spirit, the delicate, shy, low-key sampaguita, a member of the jasmine family scented to respect Filipinos as timid, shy and self-effacing.

There might have been some sentimental attempt at a joydom of a colonial population when an American governor-general declared sampaguita as the national flower, just as the colonizers decreed the tondo-script major as national hero.

But though it has foreign origin (like most Filipinos), the sampaguita probably is a fitting symbol for it stirs chords the Filipinos' self and abilities to survive against odds, among others.

For all its modest look and fragile white star-shaped flowers, the woody vine or shrub normally thrives better when conditions are harsh. Growers say the more salty the flower is so much more abundant and cheaper in the dry months, around graduation time, is because it likes the heat and just a little water.

And though it supposedly arrived in the country only in the 16th century, Filipinos seemed to have immediately taken it as their own that they weaved legends about its origin that were decidedly more romantic than being dropped from the foothills of the Himalayas.

Songs have been written about it and, perhaps most significant of all, it is the favorite offering of Filipinos. Collectors in their suites, whether in Manhattan or others at home.

Strung together into a lei, it remains the traditional welcome offering to

Home is the 'sampaguita'

CROSSINGS' new line of home décor and accessories showcases the sampaguita, a South Asian plant that Filipinos have taken as their own.

From page B1

pants.

Maybe it was the scent that made Filipinos fall in love with the sampaguita ... sweet but not cloying, never overpowering, delicately wafting around enclosed spaces like a room or a vehicle, and freshens anything it's in.

So, despite the influx of more flamboyant blooms, including foreign varieties, the sampaguita remains a sentimental favorite.

Homage

That is why when stylist Ruthy Cano was asked by Crossings Department Store to develop a totally new line of home décor and accessories, it did not take him long to decide to pay homage to the national symbol by using it as the motif for the entire collection.

Getting on board artists like the noted potter Epie Bigyan, local craftspeople, artisans and embroiderers, the line that was unveiled recently at Crossings branch in Shangri-La Plaza initially consists of curtains, towels, note cards, table runners, jars, trays, among others. Still in some are sampaguita-based items.

In the new Crossings collection, the sampaguita is embossed, etched, embedded, embroidered or sketched on the materials.

Cano, who worked on the collection for three months orchestrating the work of the various collaborators, said they wanted to present something different. He felt it was appropriate to shine the spotlight on the nation's flower, which now tended to be overlooked.

"We wanted to highlight something very Filipino," Cano said. "With the sampaguita collection, we are bringing a part of our culture into our homes."

He added that, though design-wise updated, the products used traditional materials like the *buntal* and jute, capiz and *sinamay*. The delicate blooms are "blown up" or rendered life-size, with stems and all.

Bigyan created a special line of his Fruit boxes and flowers molds that show almost every feature of the plant: veins and all for pots and jars.

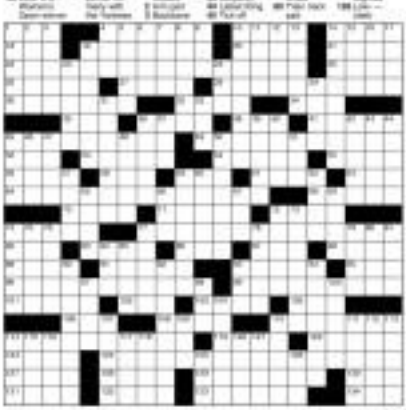
The Sampaguita Collection for Crossings Home is available in Crossings Shangri-La Plaza (5354455) and Glorietta (7253350).

In 2007, Crossings also expects to launch new product lines in fashion and shoes designed by local artists like United Pop by Robin Ocampo and Ecopa by John Rocner shoes.

FROM more cards to throw pillows, trays and towels, the national flower is getting all the exposure it deserves.

SUNDAY CROSSWORD

PREMIER CROSSWORD/ By Frank A. Longo — "I, I, CAPTN!"



answer on page F2

Shop 'til you drop. Learn. Be entertained. Bring home prizes. These could only happen at one great venue!

CHRISTMAS Gifts EXPO 2006

DECEMBER 20-24 & 26-30, 2006
MEGATRADE HALLS 2 & 3, 5/F BLDG. B, SM MEGAMALL

EXPO HIGHLIGHTS

COLLECTIBLES CHRISTMAS FAIR 2006
DECEMBER 22-23

LAFF AND LEARN KIDSHOW VENTRILOQUISM PROGRAM (PUPPET SHOW)
DECEMBER 20 (6PM), DECEMBER 24 & 26 (3PM)

'SOS WIG COMICS COLLECTIBLES AUCTION
DECEMBER 22 & 23 (12NN TO 6PM)

STAR WARS MEET & GREET PHOTO OPS
DECEMBER 22 (2PM)

ANIME COSPLAY CATWALK
DECEMBER 23 (6PM)

MAGIC SHOWS, BUBBLE SHOWS, PARLOR GAMES AND MANY OTHER ACTIVITIES FOR KIDS TO ENJOY

Sponsored by:
INQUIRER · HSBC · BusinessWorld · MEGAMALL

Organized by: MEGATRADE HALL

Co-Organized by:

THE ONE-BEDROOM unit was designed according to a Modern Chinese motif.

THE LIVING and dining area of the two-bedroom model unit basks in contemporary European elegance.

I'll take Manhattan

MANHATTAN GARden City, the newest entrant of Megaworld Corporation in cooperation with the Araneta Group, launched recently its showroom in Gateway Mall Araneta Center.

At the first transit-oriented community, the MGC is accessible. From there, one could get a ride to Monumento or to Taft Avenue, to Shaw Blvd or to Ayala Manila.

A 720 meter gardens walkway connects MGC (soon to be MRT-3 and LRT-2 Cubao Station).

Since Manhattan Garden City is within the Araneta Center, the country's first leisure and lifestyle haven, chic boutique and specialty stores will be completely accessible to residents of the tower.

The residence is very near the top basketball draws and lively entertainment at the Araneta Coliseum.

Merienda and dinner are available at The Oasis, the glitzy Gateway Mall's floating interior garden.

Research, Blogwriter and the Araneta Center's choice malls are just a short walk away.

The Manhattan Garden City offers a range of activities in the fourth-floor podium area. The 720 meter garden walkway promotes social interaction among neighbors.

Top developer Megaworld Corporation grouped the offerings into four categories for the pure enjoyment of residents.

The active set will love fitness-enhancing activities like exercising, biking and jogging along the trails.

Social-active ones should feel fun and recreation, such as the kiddie playground, teen adventure area and barbecue pits for adults.

Those in their middle ages will love chatting and exchanging pleasantries at the garden and sitting areas.

Meanwhile, flower gardening and barefoot walks along the reflexology path are grouped under the passive category.

"We recognize that people need a variety of activities to make them quality time more productive and fulfilling," said Megaworld Central Properties Inc. president Anthony Charlemagne Yu. "And this is precisely the reason why we created various groups of amenities that veer away from the standard pool, basketball court and gym. The various experiences that Manhattan Garden City residents will encounter at our five-hectare podium area will make them feel that their time spent in the amenity areas is worthwhile."

The Manhattan Garden City showroom at the Gateway Mall features model units.

The studio unit was designed with a young professional in mind. It features a soothing feel right beside the conveniences area.

The balcony of a bigger studio unit provides the resident his own space for tranquility.

The one-bedroom unit was designed in a Modern Chinese motif and its reddish hue makes it ideal for female executives.

The two-bedroom affair makes families experience contemporary European elegance.

Terra-cotta soldiers stand guard as wonderful accent pieces in the Modern Asian themed one-bedroom model unit.

Visit the showroom at the third level of Gateway Mall. Also call 913-5555 or email inquiries@thenorthmanhattan.com.

THE COUPLE will be hard pressed to top royalty in their master's suite.

TERRA-COTTA soldiers stand guard as wonderful accent pieces in the Modern Asian themed one-bedroom model unit.

New antique shop at the mall

JOANN DE ASIS-SALGADO, DAUGHTER of The Thing de Asis, founder of JoLina Arts & Antiques, knew in her heart ever as a young girl that she would inherit her mom's passion for the arts.

Salgado would silently observe how her mom ran her shop, how she managed her people, and how she meticulously treated her acquisitions. That's how she honed her own eye for truly precious antique pieces.

Salgado and husband Tito are opening the latest branch JoLina Arts & Antiques at Old Megamall. It brings pieces from India, Indonesia, Thailand, Nepal and even Ho Bong Tibet are offered by the store, along with sought-after local wooden pieces.

Salgado says Filipinos have developed a very good sense of mixing and matching. "There's fusion in food and in fashion, and people like to mix and match their clothes and accessories. I guess it's the same with art and antique acquisition and decorating one's home."

Most of those who come to JoLina stores in San Juan and Alabang are ladies and homemakers. But the owners are constantly surprised on how easy it is to sell to the male clients.

JoLina has a growing clientele of foreigners—the expat crowd, OCR execs and foreign service group. "They like our items, specially Philippine wood, and ship them to their respective countries where their work contracts here expire," says Salgado.

Visit JoLina Arts and Antiques at the 4/F of SM Megamall Building-S.

ANTIQUE circa Indian chair from Indonesia

MOSAIC and beaded hanging lamps

INDONESIAN armoire

ANTIQUE carved angel head with glass eye detail

HAND-PAINTED enamel green window from India

THE GRAND Atrium

DANCING lion at Ballroom Blvd with gifts

Magical holiday at Christmas village

SHANGRI-LA PLAZA treats Christmas shoppers to a festive holiday display of a magical Christmas Village.

Rich in snow-covered village-like backdrop, a fireplace, jolly St. Nick on his sleigh, flying leaves, festive balloons, and oversized toy trimmings and Christmas ornaments.

The display was designed by Benny Pascual who added his a peak and fresh land scape to suit the mall's interiors.

Adding a level of energy and movement were details like heavy rainfall in flight, with legs set in various directions and the positions of mannequins as all happy.

The Shangri-La Plaza Christmas Village has shoppers indulge in a birds-brown ty and wishful thinking as they savor the vibrant spirit of the season.

HANDBLUYONG Hapee Hopkal Corporate and Shangri-La Plaza general manager Lito Pejo, with Shang executives Mary Ann Elson (left) and Jolyn Tiglao (right) at the ceremonial lighting of the giant Christmas tree

SUNDAY
DECEMBER 17, 2006
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

ENTERTAINMENT

Celso Bonoan G. Velarde

ANGEL LOCSIN

VIVIAN VIANCA

INSIDE

- 'Idol' post-mortem by Ryan Cayabyab J/4
- Recalling FPJ's last night with friends J/3
- Catching up with Fantasia Barrino K/4

A delightful CHRISTMAS extravaganza

By Pocholo Concepcion, Contributor
Photos by Rodel Rafanan

GREAT MUSICAL ARRANGEMENTS took the strain out of watching an overwhelming lineup of TV, theater and music stars at the 2006 ABS-CBN Christmas Special, "Tatay na Tatay pa rin ang Pasko," held Dec. 13 at the Meralco Theater.

The creative inputs of Gerard Salonga, Nic Mercado, Raul Samson and Jun Cimafranca, among others, were a source of delight that guided musical director Mel Sillona and the house band through 14 enthralling production numbers.

For instance, the burden of presenting more than 30 talents from the Star Magic stable seemed like a breeze with a medley that combined such disparate genres as '70s Swedish pop (ABBA's "Dancing Queen," "Mamma Mia") and '50s rock (Elvis Presley's "Teddy Bear," "Hound Dog"). For a moment, it didn't matter that Zsolt Kiprotimusz was struggling a bit to keep in synch with the choreography.

Sillona himself demonstrated brilliance in the "Big Band Suite" segment, in which the likes of Iza Villasis and Rica Peralejo dazzled with jazz versions of Sondheim's "Gypsy" and Kern&Hesse's "Nerds," respectively.

Samson's ode on Broadway tunes gathered

ANNA MARTINEZ, R

GABBI Garcia and Maria Isabel Lopez

British firm buys 'Silip'

Remastered '80s film to be released on DVD in US

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

"SILIP" A 1986 FILM DIRECTED BY ELWOOD Perez, was bought by the British film house Pendulum, to be released under the Manila Macabre DVD imprint abroad.

The news was confirmed by Rez Santos of Rowen Villanueva Macabre Press and producer Wilson Tieng of Viking Films International.

"Silip" was scrubbed by Star Entertainment and Maria Isabel Lopez and eminently Baby Cart.

Tieng and Waterfield Insanna Entertainment in separate interviews that "Silip" had its premiere at the 21st Olympia International Film Festival in San Francisco recently on the eve of the infamous 1986 Edsa Revolution.

"I sold 'Silip' to different countries in the mid-1980s," Tieng related.

Over a decade later, British film critic Tarkel said his interest in the film's effect was sparked.

"I first saw it about 20 years ago through a review website by [Mikee Cal] who was Nora Aunor in light and found [magazine]," Tarkel recalled.

He said he had become "fascinated" with the film that, even during the Marcos era, Filipino filmmakers succeeded in making films that

MOVIES, K

A delightful Christmas extravaganza

From page 8

12 theater stalwarts, with Robert Arbolo lung-busting vocals shooting through the roof-beams.

Meanwhile, a number called "Happy Feet" brought the house down as Vhong Navarro and John Prats led a company of talents, joined by Philippine Ballet Theater, the Streetboys and other dance groups in shaking the stage with loops from "Boogie Wonderland" and other incredible tricks by COSI-mistress.

Probably the highest point came when Gary Valenciano and Sweetnotes were joined in a number that had a classic Gospel hymn segueing into a climactic rock tune, both incoherently titled "Hallelujah." It was pure joy seeing Valenciano

KABUHAYAN II

AGA Muhlach and Charlene Gonzales

ABS-CBN execs Gabby Lopez, Charo Santos-Concio and Martin Nievera

PHILSTARGLOBAL

KICA PENALEJO

IRISH FULLERTON

ADOT BIGNO

FORWARD

The lineup of stars was overwhelming

DIRECTOR Howard Ferrez in New York in the 1930s

British firm buys ...

Twenty years later, this passionate film still has an audience, says UK critic

From page 8

"Exalted boundaries."

"It was a belated new wave," Tambo-oddities Inc. director-owned tweeted.

By sheer happenstance, he stumbled on an old 16-B camera at a Filipino film-titled "Sellotomato" or "Heaven of Virginity" in a bargain bin in Rome, Italy.

"I recognized the cast as being that of 'Silly.' It was dubbed in Italian and was severely cut (20 minutes was missing). But I got the distinct impression as I watched that it was an unheralded minor classic."

With dispatch, he embarked on a burning expedition. "I asked everyone about it, but no one had seen the film or even heard of it."

A year after finding the 1930 tape in Rome, Tambo discovered upon a dissertation of the film's editor (dubbed in English and exhibited in Oviedo on eBay where it was bought by a friend for $200.

"I was simply amazed and soon after I contacted [Tessy, who's now with Globe Films and began the process of licensing the title from [him] for a new DVD and theatrical release," he recounted.

Tambo wrote the book "Mondo Macabro" which, according to his e-mail, was "later commissioned as a TV series by Channel 4 in the UK."

"As part of the research for the TV program, I visited the Philippines and interviewed filmmakers Eddie Romero, Peque Gallaga, Lore Reyes, Dante Rivers and [actress] Sheridan Reyners," he pointed out.

Movie classics

He had previously seen "acknowledged classics" like Lino Brocka's "Maynila sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag" and Mike de Leon's "Kisapmata" and "Batch '81," but the other end of the spectrum, I've also seen more outrageous examples of popular cinema, including the 'funny' series, 'Temir and Iphin-three' and 'Pating Ming movies.'"

Needless to say, he is quite acquainted with Philippine cinema.

In his e-mail, Tambo described "Silly" as "bizarre, full ... visually."

"[It] deals with primal issues: desire and repression, love and death, freedom and conformity, the dreams of youth versus the compromises of old age. These are subjects that have been dealt with before in cinema. In the Philippines, as Yarnell, but here the context and tone and the richness that results ... savage and subversive," he explained.

In an interview with the Inquirer, Perez called his work a "film on religious indoctrination."

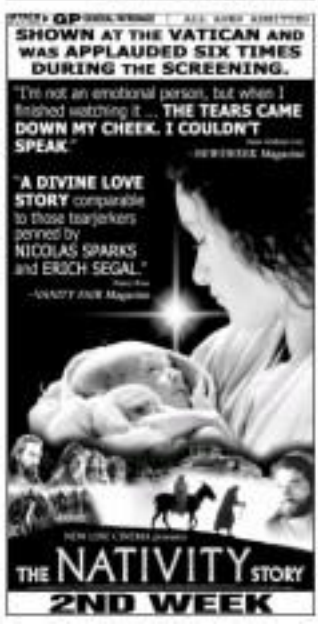
Tambo insisted that, 20 years later, there is "still an audience for 'Silly.' There are always people who are looking for something new and different. There are plenty of films with lurid overtones out there. [But] what 'Silly' has is passion and commitment ... It's an original."

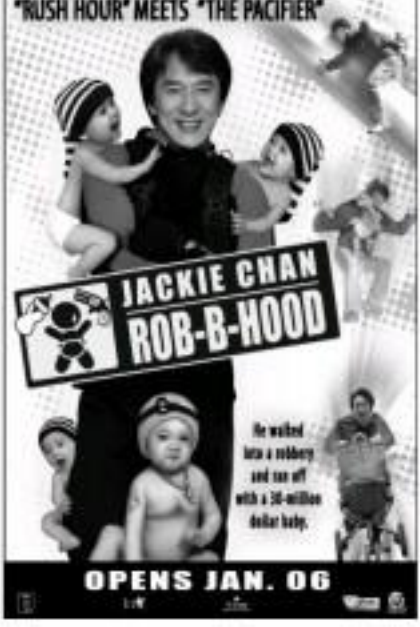
Tambo reported that the plan is to "release the film on DVD sometime in 2007."

He is currently working on "remastering the film from the original negative to get the best possible version. We want to maximize the original widescreen framing and restore the color timing. It's important that the film looks good."

He relayed that his company is also planning to release "another uncompromising film [of the same period], Celso Ad. Castillo's 'Scalo Sisters,' later in 2007."

"If these releases go as planned, we certainly hope to license other Filipino films, including some more recent productions," he affirmed.





A delightful . . .

From page 6

DID YOU KNOW...

ENTERTAINMENT highlights during the week of Dec. 17-23:

1933: Five-year-old Shirley Temple signed a movie contract with Fox. Her age was later changed to make her appear a year younger.

1969: George Harrison, Paul McCartney and John Lennon performed as The Quarrymen at the wedding reception of Harrison's brother Harry.

1970: Elvis Presley paid a visit to President Richard Nixon at the White House.

1971: Singer Bobby Darin died during open heart surgery. He was 37.

crashing up the auditorium and egging on Rambos, as the latter punctuated the pumping lyrics with patented hip hop and boxing jigs.

Male housebottle John Lloyd Cruz, Zanjo Marudo, Sam Milby, Rufful Ronolf and Victor Basa couldn't really sing properly, but were nonetheless applauded for every dashing look they gave to the fans.

Boy Abunda went onstage to introduce a number, and it was totally refreshing to see him in a conservative black suit than his deviant dress his usually outrageous attire.

Vhong could be more outrageous that night, at least in appearance, than ALFA de las Alas Guelanlah was the pronouncement of the judges that was forthcoming after Regala's singing rival at the Bigas-Kiri Sensacs, topped with a ha-hay-kabo at the viewers. "Make mo seeking kwakyawt to ka," she cursed. "Well, di ka sa Regalo nanonong pine-trees or pwedeng gawing Christmas tree!"

Upmanlosse on the other hand was the reaction to Willy Revillame's audio, which didn't spare ABS-CBN bosses Cabby Legaspi, Charo Santos-Concio and Gay Velasco, among others, from taking part in the "Brano Tawa" routine. Quite embarrassed was one network executive, Enrico Santos, whose refusal to participate nearly caused Revillame to tumble down the orchestra pit.

At show's end, the two were seen hashing at each other as Lopez tried to calm them down. (See related item in Starbes, page L14.)

Oh well, maybe that's just typical of Superstar/Star love relationships.

The ABS-CBN Christmas Special airs tonight at 9:45.

Premiere night on DEC. 19 at SM MEGAMALL CINEMA 10
Catch the Shake Rattle & Roll 8 Special Presentation this Sunday, December 17 on SOP and ASAP!

Premiere night on DEC. 21 at SM NORTH EDSA CINEMA 7
Catch the Mano Po 5 Special Presentation this Sunday, December 17 on SOP!

Premiere night on DEC. 20 at SM MEGAMALL CINEMA 10

Premiere night on DEC. 22 at SM MEGAMALL CINEMA 10
Catch the Super Noypi Special Presentation this Sunday, December 17 on SOP and ASAP!

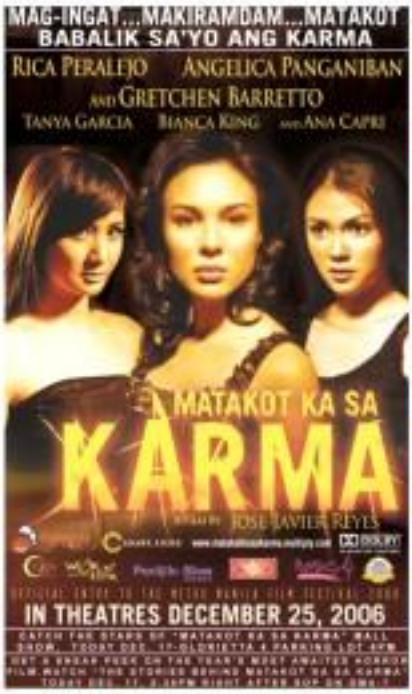
The fantastic 'Idol' journey

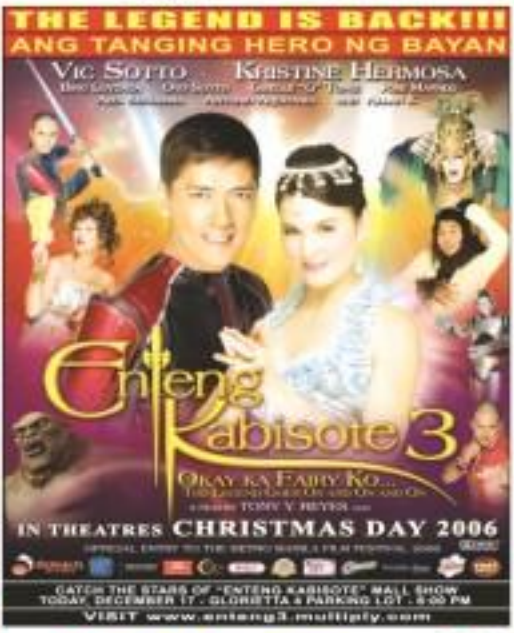
Ryan Cayabyab writes about being a judge on the just-concluded reality TV talent search

THE AUTHOR, left, with fellow judges Pilita Corrales and Freddie

DISCOVERING AND TRAINING NEW singers and music composers are dearest to my heart—having taught composition and music theory at the UP College of Music for almost two decades, running my music school for 30 years with my wife Gemma where we discovered and coached a lot of young singers and performers, and being typecast by the amateur singing contest "Kay Ganda Kumanta" in the early 1980s.

So it was not a surprise that I got hooked





The fantastic 'Idol' journey

'In the end, only the viewing public will decide who best deserves to win'

Pretzeppage 44

Immediately on "American Idol" when my family visited the US in 2003 (the Baliwo frankfurd edition), I had not experienced anything like it. Our hosts and their satellite family convened at 8 p.m., dropped everything and watched the "Idol."

During commercials, there was a point but has filled debate regarding the performance of this and that singer. The show were on for about an hour and the second discussion was fundamentally when the familiar music came to pop heralded the new premiere.

The next year, the Bayanda Baroso edition, and the following year's Carrie Underwood edition were winners in the Philippines. A lot of Filipinos got hooked. I remember how my colleagues were polarized between the rocker fits like and the pretty Carrie.

The following year was the Taylor Hicks edition. He wasn't the best vocalist among the five, but I was a fan from the start.

It was during the airing of this latest edition that Bobby Barnes, ABC 5 managing director, scheduled a consultation meeting with our respective possible names for judges, music director and vocal coach for the local edition which the network acquired from Fremantle Media, UK, the company responsible for "Idol's" worldwide franchise.

During the meeting, I asked him casually why he wasn't considering me as a judge. "I didn't think you would be interested," he remarked. Of course I was—how could I not be, being a huge fan of "Idol"? All I needed was a job interview. Barnes flipped Fremantle for the (by-now-a-big-hit-for-which-I'm-ravenous-and-wrinkle-dresses) Bobby Inkwood. Fremantle that I was joining and that they need not audition me.

Mock staging

The start of the journey to judge was a mock staging of a typical "Idol" audition. Jessa Queen of Song Pilita Corrales, master rapper Francis Magalona and I were made to "audition" about 15 singers, with the entire recording the proceedings.

Perry Ibarlan, ABC 5 head of Creative and Entertainment Production, guided us through the process and gave us pointers and possible words to use when we were at a loss, possible ideas, and more acceptable ways to dismiss a non-talent. It wasn't so difficult to get into the shoes of an "Idol" judge since the templates were clear and simple.

Or so I thought.

Of course, we could say anything we want but there was a very important caveat: to tell the truth, and be very honest about our role as "guides" to the aspiring performer, not merely as "judge."

This mantra to "tell the truth" kept spinning out of the mouths of Perry and Sheldon Bailey, Fremantle supervising producer. I thought that was easy; I realized later that it wasn't that simple.

I learned so many details about the "Idol" show format from Sheldon that it confirmed a lot of the series in my mind regarding the success of the show. I learned lots of information about the show in the other countries.

Being the 20th "Idol" franchisee, it is a surprise that we, a singing-contest-happy country, did not get the franchise earlier. Indonesia just ended its third season, India and Singapore are about to wind up their second.

Arabic version

The "Pan-Arabian Idol" is very interesting. Arabic songs are not like the usual Western pop songs that last only three minutes; their songs can stretch up to eight to 15 minutes. It just isn't possible to cut them short. That means the show lasted more than three hours at least per episode in that season's premiere.

Everything I reported about the "Idol" format came to pass—from the structured audition process from the "cattle call" to the selection of the Top 24(!), to the unusual number of contestants who thought they were "Idol" material.

It seemed like ABC 5 had everything done to the last detail written in their voluminous template. Plus many other things besides, like the casting of security people, the audition-site number of production people, the mass, mass material and crew and segment producers and writers.

It could have been an executive producer's nightmare to put it all together.

Only during the final show-down at the Araneta Coliseum was it revealed to me that there were only two people from ABC 5 handling the production. All the rest were freelancers.

Hoarding/giving staff

What? Realized? Most of them were moonlighting from either the Superstars or Kapuso channels. And they included the judges and the host.

There was no hesitation or nervousness when Dilbo, Francis, Ryan Agoncillo and I got together for the first time. Saluking with pros is always a delight, as it didn't matter if I had to do a Kapuso, Francis, a host or "Sir Dilbo" (an independent production for a GMA 7 station show owned by less) or Ryan 1 (from Agoncillo) and Ryan 2 (that's me) as both Agoncillos or Bolos.

Ryan 2 did not own MO-DN show that lasted almost six years (1998 to 1994). That makes me a Agoncillo almost, although not an exclusive artist. I had worked as Dilbo's music director for some time, and we were together, too, on "Sing Galing Pinoy."

The four of us hit it off right away. We concentrated on the work at hand.

Listening to about 70 artists a day is not difficult, especially if we were only tasked to register the good ones. But we were there to sing as to hash the gold apart and to give a chance for even the number of people we were using to Hollywood, or Manila.

The quota was 250. Bailey agreed that by the end of the day we would be sending all 100 to Hollywood, or Manila. That meant two things: 1) Where both the cutoff was—we would be allowed to go as far as we were willing to listen to all of them again; 2) If we weren't willing to listen to all of them again, he was assured the bus and throw away the doorman.

The remaining contestants had to squeeze through a tight window. This was where the senior "Idol" supervisors started to harass—the bugging, the whining, the squealing, the boy crying, the crying, the crying, and later the cursing and the gnashing of teeth.

CATCHING a few Zs between auditions.

PLAYING shortstop for (from left) Francis M., guest judge Lea Salonga, finalist Jeff Mateo and Pilita Corrales

Not a hard task

There were at least 15 singers in the line, and they were instructed to sing a portion of their original audition song. Almost all had sung, each group of 15 was sent in again, to listen to the verdict of the judges.

Only 81 were chosen to move on to the next level. This was not a hard task for the judges. It is important to see who can't sing, especially when there are clear comparisons to be made.

The Top 81 singers were grouped into threes and given song choices to hash out/sing/do and perform the next day. The group dynamics here showed the fears of a lot of people. But the better singers prevailed again.

Judging in this portion was a bit more difficult because we had to use the effect they put in to perform as best as they could while competing with their teammates.

The announcement of the Top 40 was the most grueling.

The 81 singers were divided into four, and placed in different rooms. Three were 20 people in each of the rooms—only seven would make it to the Top 40; the other one would be dismissed.

The announcement spiel and sequence followed a template. Two rooms overlooked with cameras inside observers and family and friends of young auditionees, as the first four names started to be called.

Disbelief

Disbelief from the other two rooms ensued after the announcements.

The second night is such an emotional evening because many of those who have bonded throughout the process that far were finally separated. But there was no time for goodbyes since the Top 40 contestants were quickly herded into another meeting for their song assignments. They would sing the next day.

They had to pick from a list of six songs. That was make-or-break time, and they had only one night and one chance to battle-for-one.

The chart and ultimate day is Hollywood, er, Manila...to be more specific...at the CCP—was a day of either final cheer or final gloom for the remaining singers. Judging here was the toughest.

There were so many good singers crowding to get into the Top 24.

The deliberation to choose the Top 24 was heartbreaking. Many also-deserving singers did not make the final cut. This was our last day as judges, because the next level of competition would entail changing our rules to being mentors of trade, and president of guidance. Henceforth, viewers would make the decisions.

Clear assessments

Shifting gears, the judges were advised to give clear reactions or assessments of the performers.

This being live television, whatever we said could affect the singers' chances. At the start, the comparisons were done on hand-by, with hand and sound rehearsals on Friday, while the results night was held on Sunday.

Texting via text or phone happened right after competition night (called "Spectacular" in the templates) and stretched to 6:30 p.m. the following day. Later in the competition, this 20-hour voting time became two hours.

I made it a point to sit through Friday rehearsals, take down notes, correct the next day for the final Saturday night and then write down my final assessment in a notebook right before the "Spectacular" started. More often than not, I ended up staying mostly after I had observed and written notes, although some times I got engulfed when the performers suddenly changed their attacks on the song during the actual performance!

I enjoyed every bit of time listening to the singers rehearse. There were one good, I kept telling myself. But I had to look for other dimensions in their performance that could help them improve their chances of being the "Idol" winner. That included being very detached from them. That was quite hard for me to do.

Lesson in detachment

I wanted so much to approach each one of them immediately after they rehearsed to tell them how to improve their performances, to encourage their flaws and to focus on their strengths. But the templates specified that judges should be detached from the contestants.

Early, it is difficult to give a tip and I worked assessments if one is related or has any emotional attachment whatsoever. We were looking for the best of the best, and we were reminded every time before the show to "tell the truth."

The truth is easy to tell. Sometimes, the amount of truth one can say, and the style of delivering it could vary from one person to another, and from one song to next, from one judge to another.

One can probably measure on the number of times a singer hit the wrong notes, or the number of times he did an annoying habit, or the way she gave a lackluster performance, a tentative attack, a riveting performance, a show-stopper, a standard one-person, the wrong key for the singer, wrong words and pronunciation, etc.

The permutations are endless and we have to be constantly interrupting since every performance is both an art and a science.

Validations

What lessons or validations are apparent from the "Idol" show?

1) This show could not be the deep reserve of natural singing talent in the country, from the tricycle riding in the chauffeured kit, from the parochial-schooled to the university-bred, from the center level of competition would only love to sing, they have the voices to match the passion.

2) Talent is supreme, it natural gift has infinitely more weight than it will acquired through study. But a gifted performer that does not come with a generous heart will not be gifted with a recipocating, adoring audience.

3) Heart to talent is that all-important character that exudes from the performer. It is not the mysterious X factor that we are made to believe. It is simply the person's charm, sincerity and humility that draw the audience to him or her.

4) Great talent enhances the person's external appearance. An enhanced appearance can never fill-in the lack of talent.

5) Idols (as never kids the truth from the audience, especially the TV audience. Every smile, every answer, every smile is seen and the corresponding reaction is magnified a thousand times.

6) There are no "untalented" singers in the "Idol" ilk. Every contestant is treated equally. The finalists who made it to the top waited in line together with everyone else, and went through the same grueling procedure.

7) The job to choose the best possible singers to be included in the Top 24 rests solely on the judges. No other persons or entity (not even ABC 5 bigwigs, has any say on who should, or should not land in the Top 24.

8) No one knows exactly what the future brings. Contestants and supporters should always be hopeful and give their best in all times and accept gracefully whatever the outcome is.

9) It is very important to have your close family and community support you. With a spirit of cheer, it's safe that graduates into a network of admirers, one becomes an "Idol" without having to win the competition.

10) You can bet for yourself as many votes as you want, but in the end, only the people decide who deserves the title "Philippine Idol."

ENTERTAINMENT

NATIONAL artist and film director Eddie Romero makes his hand prints on a clay slab at Tipak, Baguio's Walk of Fame. PHOTOS BY YOSHI GARAMOT, PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

GITO Lapid, above, waves in awe during the parade that preceded the Walk of Fame event. At left, the senator-actor goes through the foot print procedure. The Hollywood prototype requires only the hand and shoe print of celebrities. Tipak organizers say feet prints add a local touch to the Philippine version.

First 3 on Baguio Walk of Fame

By Vincent Cabreza
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—THE summer capital gave National Artist Eddie Romero, actor Cesar Montano and Sen. Manuel "Lito" Lapid their own slabs on the city's "Walk of Fame," which emulates the world-famous attraction at the Grauman's Chinese Theater in Hollywood.

The inauguration of "Tipak" on Friday kicked off the Baguio leg of the forthcoming 22nd Metro Manila Film Festival. The city was invited to join the film festival in 2004 when the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA), its organizer, decided to "nationalize" the festival.

Baguio's main role in the last two years was to host a parade of stars under the helm of actor Jinggoy "Chingoy" Adamos. Friday's event was the city's first intrusion on festival celebrities, said Brendino Ghamdino, city tourism officer.

A long pause

It took some coaxing for Romero to shed his taciturnity. Tipak required the veteran director to provide imprints of his bare hands—and feet—on hardening clay.

"Did Grauman, who built the 89-year-old theater in Hollywood, come up with the idea of putting celebrity footprints in wet cement, but Mr Walk of Fame, in this day, only require stars' hand and shoe prints alongside their signatures.)

Romero paused for a very long time [where we asked him to go barefoot], and we had to explain every detail to him," said artist Rafael Esperon.

Raposas, a member of the Baguio Community of Volunteers Movement (BCVM), which executed the concept, said taking the stars' foot impression was necessary to keep the concept Filipino.

However, Montano and Lapid appeared surprised when men wearing g-strings around them each on a blue mud and massaged their feet with warm water as part of the ritual.

Five pearly

They were then asked to set their feet on an inch of hardening clay, which was encased in small wooden boxes. After the attendants washed off the grime, the trio imprinted their handprints, and autographs on their ring slabs.

"The slabs will be hardened in an oven and installed in front of a covered cinema [inside a local mall]," said Gabriel Kridh, the project's spokesman.

Lapid, who was honored for his previously of "pure love" said out by saying appreciation to kick the event.

Montano, cited for the accolade he garnered by portraying national hero Jose Rizal, was cheered on by his wife, actress Sandino Cruz.

Romero was the last of the three to stand barefoot in the clay. He was honored for elevating film directing in the country.

Five show business stalwarts will be invited to Tipak every year.

Sen. Ramon Revilla Jr. and movie producer Lily Monteverde were to have joined the trio on Friday, but they didn't make it to the inauguration.

CESAR Montano's mark on the slab.

BUSY during the parade, with his wife Sandino.

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SPIRIT TRAP

ROUNDUP

Christmas special

UBS Network airs "Ang Iisang ng Pinkong Kapuso: The GMA Christmas Special" tonight after "Daddy Di Do Du."

The show brings together the network stars and the characters in its prime-time shows.

To be featured are a farewell between Babalong (Jeanylene Dizon) and Babalong (Richard V), the encounters between the protagonists of "Atlantika" (Dingdong Dantes, Iza Calzado, Isabel Oli, Valerie Concepcion, and Katrina Halili) and the wacky cast of "Bahay Mo Ba Yan?" (Ronaldo Valdez, Rosie Tobias, Secretario Al Louis, Princess Punzalan, Gladys Reyes, Mike "Pekto" Nieves, Tiya Pusit and Dino Guevarra), and the battle between Captain Barbell (Richard Gutierrez) and Rapidman Barbie (Yeo Otaza).

'Blood Diamond' premiers

The thriller "Blood Diamond" will hold its international premiere on Dec. 8 at Greenbelt 3.

Set against the backdrop of the chaos and civil war that enveloped 1990s Sierra Leone, the movie is the story of Danny Archer (Leonardo DiCaprio), an ex-mercenary from Zimbabwean and Solomon Vandy (Djimon Hounsou), a Mende fisherman.

The new trailers of Warner's upcoming movies "300," "Music and Lyrics" and "Zodiac" will also be shown as added attractions to the premiere.

Opening in local theaters on Jan. 6, the movie is distributed by Warner Bros. Pictures.

'I heard Da King groan'

From page J1

The studio guys were skittish during choirsome golfers were toppled over tables being throwndout of the way.

Even when Elvis' dance up, Jon believe they could get Da King in. I heard him groan!

Losing track

At this point, I had lost track of time. One minute was in rumination to reach St. Luke's Hospital. One feeling of helplessness intensified. It was the medical team's turn to be around Bonnie. The ladies withdrew into a quiet area. Mama Mary's heads never felt so much favor as it did between the ladies' fingers as Nonnie Gaston led the praying of the rosary.

While Bonnie was in the ICU (where he stayed for only 30 minutes), Dr. Arthur Carbon at Room 148, the Ambulo waited for 5 minutes as we sat on the stairway.

I remembered that groan of piercing pain. That was two years ago. Up until now, I can still hear the stuff scared that has become metaphorical now-time and with Bonnie gone. "Groaning" that groan now is seeing beyond the arteries that clogged mama and his heart. In a way I might hope that he could save his countryman from starvation. He knew exactly what he wanted to achieve, and he knew the only way to do it, and in my way, was to play the daily game of politics—and win it! He had a pure heart but did not possess the essential to win it, I guess.

Da King's groan was a cry of sadness, too.

The Ambulo wept over Bonnie's cut. Isaac the party scene that night, only we were ago. It was out of run, like he had one more scene to finish. But Bonnie always wanted to do things with flair. Now that we remember him on that fateful, chilly night of December, they bearing his groan all over again, but I'm no longer hearing a cry of agony.

One day God will put the appropriate ending to Bonnie's unfinished epic. No eighteen-man line, in vain. There is truth in what that Bulacan said about our color grow man. Sonnie: "This world was never meant for one as beautiful as you."

For reactions and more news on PBA, email: sonnyalcantara@yahoo.com.

NOW SHOWING

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SHAOLIN 2 VS EVIL DEAD

BONNIE's last photo taken with a select group he was said to have considered his "Da King's Men."

'I heard Da King groan'

Remembering FPJ's last night with pals

By Teresa M. Peñera, Jr.
Contributor

FIRST MASS OF DECEMBER 2006. Both Agustin and Fernando Poe, Jr. were conversing on the phone—Butch was in Diamond's Café in Silang, Cavite; Bonnie in FPJ Studio in Quezon City. Bonnie invited the Butchoks (or as he put it, do-ber 4-ers) to a Christmas party on Dec. 13, 7 p.m. at the studio's locale, but sorry. Just a small group, he said, but very dear friends. Whose list of keepers would be invited to another party on Dec. 16, when he and wife Susan celebrated their wedding anniversary. Butch blasted Dec. 13 on his calendar and looked forward to the day with happy anticipation—not knowing that the second, at the end, valentine day had seven cents!

At 66 years, Butch and I hit the Agoncillo highway in Silang, headed for FPJ Studio.

9:18 p.m. Butch received a text message from Susana Lozano: "Where are you?"

10 p.m. We finally reach our destination. Earlier, we had received a second text message, either from Leonell Cassman or Ningning Gonzales: "Butch darating ngayon kyo?" We could imagine the anniversary on Bonnie's face if I pushed my car right in front of the studio's main door. Butch thought aloud, "Hindi parang mag-kaptan ng party!"

I found my way to Bonnie's table and Butch's lunch with him. "Why now today?" he asked with a discernable aura of downtown about him. It would learn later that Bonnie had been complaining of intermittent headaches, which he had attributed to new reading glasses. I also learned that his son Eagle, Bonnie's Cad Friday that he had been sidling his old movies all day, with Jimmy Fabregas improving the instrumentation of the theme songs ("Pyrmid-kun-komi-kun.")

I replied for lack of a better thing to say. Across the table, the gentlemanly Eddie Garcia chuckled at my silly rejoinder.

Then it was Butch's turn to explain to Bonnie why we were late. Bonnie listened without saying a word—not even when the bugged him as a peace offering.

One game Bonnie loved to play with friends is called "guess close." He'd make the entire first set-aside by ignoring late. But before long, Bonnie would make up for his "mistake" by showing the dollar. (Butch might it was Bush) with choco-

lates, roses and everything-nice—sometimes expensive!

(But Bonnie Aunan Hau divulged on the last night of Bonnie's wake in Santo Domingo Church: "The great Hau ka ni Bonnie, how he enjoy.")

10:30 p.m. While enjoying a scrumptious meal (I had my back turned to the table where Bonnie, Mayor Jojo Binay, Cong. Chit Fernandez, Eddie Garcia, Jose Mari Velez were seated) I heard Bonnie on the phone. He was congratulating Manny Pacquiao for winning his latest world title bout. "Congratulations Manny!" he said. "Ikinoy-ninoy ni tayo ngayon!"

10:45 p.m. Butch decided to read Bonnie's favorite quote. She wrote him a note. "Pareng kulang-mas-t-sabi!"

Bonnie asked the waiter who brought him the note to read it for him. Then he crumpled the note and seemed to be mumbling up. The dentists all thought he was reacting to the note. "Napaniwala siya..." But Bonnie was having his bedtime. The hand that held the crumpled note went right back to the chair to

support his weight.

Instantly, the tables were deserted, and Bonnie was swallowed up in a cluster of caring friends who didn't know exactly what to do apart from massaging his legs as Butch did, supporting his back as the men did.

"Sir, dadalin ko sa ospital!" Junior Tiglo was owner of the downtown cafe. Or Bing had to know everything. Then we couldn't do more for him. "Dalhin na natin." Mayor Binay decided before Bonnie could not.

(more p)

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Willie Revillame vs studio exec at Kapamilya event

THREE INCIDENTS WITNESSED TOLD THE Inquirer Entertainment about the heated exchange of words between "Wowowee" host Willie Revillame and ABS-CBN exec Deodoro Suntay—and backstage—during the "Kapamilya" Christmas special on Wednesday.

There was a "pushing incident" onstage in full view of the live audience in the Mother Theater, and then Revillame reportedly confronted Suntay after the finale.

He was heard cursing Suntay, and blurting out, "Wrong ba ako (Was I embarrassed me)?"

To which, Suntay retorted: "It was just a joke."

"It was scary," said one of my eyewitnesses. "Nerve-wracking."

"It was unfortunate," another one said. "There was a lack of respect on Willie's part when he pushed Willie. And Willie was nothing when he confronted Deodoro after."

"People were talking about it all night," one theater source added. "Although they would've been both my friend, it had been a long day."

Inquirer Entertainment tried to reach the participants, who both refused to issue statements.

In fact, Revillame was a no-show on his own program on Thursday and Friday.

"He lost his voice," said a producer.

We can't help but wonder about the pushing bit. Was that because Revillame made the statement do the "Boom-Tu-Rat"?

Boru fide TV star

LOS ANGELES — Sticking both an e-mark with a hot cup of tea, Taylor Hicks looks as comfortable backstage at the "Tonight Show" as he might in his own home. When Jay Leno, the talk show's host, pops into Hicks' dressing room to say hello, the gray-haired soul singer is confused — a moment that reflects just how much "American Idol" has changed the 30-year-old's life.

A year ago, Hicks was a struggling musician unknown to those outside the small Southern clubs where he performed. Today, he is a bona fide TV star and sugar-label recording artist whose self-titled solo debut hit stores Tuesday.

"It's mind-blowing," Hicks told the Associated Press before taking the "Tonight Show" stage to testify. "This is what happens when you catch a break. I'm very thankful and very gracious for what the show has done for me."

More than 63 million votes were cast to determine this year's "AI," and the majority of people chose Hicks over Katherine McPhee as the winners in May, shifting his music career into overdrive.

He spent the summer touring the country with his fellow finalists. When the concert wrapped in September, Hicks began his solitary solo leg, making music magic! Clive Davis to craft an album that would be a fitting follow to his star-making "Idol" turn.

It was an "intimidating" experience, Hicks said, but he's happy with the result.

The past year was packed with accolades for him, besides earning the "Idol" title. He was named People magazine's "Hottest Bachelor" for 2006, a distinction he said left him "completely flustered and completely freaked out."

The honor hasn't led to romance, and Hicks said he would hardly have time for it, did. AP

TAYLOR HICKS

Look, Jay, look

HONG KONG — Taiwanese pop star and acting novice Jay Chou says he couldn't look Chinese actress Gong Li in the eye when they started shooting scenes for their upcoming movie "Curse of the Golden Flower."

"I was nervous, so my line of sight would always be directed at her eyes," Chou, 27, told Sina TV special posted on the Chinese news Web site Sina.com on Friday. "After doing a few scenes with her, she helped me relax slowly." "Curse of the Golden Flower," which opens Dec. 29, revolves around the power struggle between an ardent Chinese king (Chow Yun-fat), his queen (Gong) and his three sons. Chou plays one of the princes.

JENNIFER HUDSON

The movie is directed by famed Chinese director Zhang Yimou.

Chou is one of Chinese pop's biggest names, but he has started to culminate an acting career. AP

Oscar a 'nice surprise'

BOSTON — Jamie Foxx, Meryl Streep, Alan Arkin and Jennifer Hudson were among those who will be presented with honorary Oscars at the Governors Awards on Feb. 25.

Morricone is the man behind the memorable music used in 1966's spaghetti western cult classic "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly" and classic movies such as "Cinema Paradiso" and has composed more than 500 scores in a career spanning 45 years.

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences said on Wednesday he will be presented with the award at the 2007 Oscars in Hollywood on Feb. 25.

"I am stressed but happy because the Oscar is coming my way while I am still fully active in my profession," the 78-year old said. "In my life, I've never sought the career trophy. I have never asked a director to be allowed to work with him and I've never asked anybody to promote me, especially not in America. The Oscar is a nice surprise. I had stopped thinking about it." AFP

GONG LI

'Idol' wannabe now screen idol

SEOUL — Last year, months I believed opening were running out.

Her 15 minutes of "American Idol" fame were winning. She was without the recording contract she so desired. She had no manager to guide her. And she was spending her days in a recording studio with "random producers," singing songs for no audience ever to be determined.

Hudson began to think that her dreams of stardom might be fading—and that she was wasting her time.

But she didn't give up.

"I knew there was something to draw [from]," she says.

It only took a few months for her to find out what that something would be: the pivotal role of the temperamental, tragic Effie White in the long-awaited movie production of the '60s Broadway musical "Dreamgirls," loosely based on Motown and the Supremes.

Though the film stars heavyweights like Academy Award winners Jamie Foxx, Eddie Murphy and Beyoncé, it's the 25-year-old Hudson, making her feature-film debut, who has become the movie's revelation with a breathtaking performance that's sparking Oscar talk. AP

ENTERTAINMENT

Golden Globe nominees named

ONLY IN HOLLYWOOD

Rhoderi V. Nepomuceno

LOS ANGELES—AFTER A year-round of film screenings, including a last-minute trip to New York to watch a rushed version of Sienna Miller's "Factory Girl," our Oldhollywood Foreign Press Association] nominations to the 64th Annual Golden Globe Awards were announced at the traditional early morning ceremonies at The Beverly Hilton.

I stayed up till 3 on Monday morning to fill out my nominations ballot. I thought this year was more competitive as I was actually more excited to hear the nominations than last year when I voted for the first time.

One of the issues before the nominations reminder list was finalized by our group was whether Jennifer Hudson, the "American Idol" finalist who gave an excellent performance in the musical-turned-movie "Dreamgirls," should be nominated for lead or supporting actress. Initially, the opinion was that [word] should be nominated in the Best Actress Award category...that's a testament to the impact of her portrayal of Effie White, the one who was left out in the formandlord account of the fate of Diana Ross and the Supremes.

In the end, a decision was made to put Jennifer in the supporting actress race while Beyoncé Knowles, who portrays the character inspired by Ms. Ross, gets to compete in the lead actress derby in last Thursday morning's show, at the originally hour of 5:30 a.m., both women clutched sentimental tears.

"There was a collective laughter of amusement and appreciation in the ballroom when Jessica Biel, who announced the nominations along with Ronaldo Bowen and Matthew Perry, gamely recited "Beyoncé Cadillaced Lustrings of America for Make Beauth Glowtone Station of Excellence" notes...once [illegible] announced Sacha Baron Cohen as a Best Actor nominee in the Comedy or Musical category and when the British comedian's film *Borat* was named in the running for Best Comedy or Musical.

Matthew, who had the lack of hearing his name as one of the nominees for Best Actor in a Mini-Series or Movie Made for Television, was inspired enough to "break into a "Good morning, I love you all" when his turn came to read his share of the nominations list.

As usual, flutes of champagne were ready to be sipped by the doors when the ceremony was all over but journalists and publicists rushed out to file their stories and count their victories and losses, respectively. The TV shows folks stayed behind to interview Renata Cohen chauffeurs energized most us who woke up at 3 in the morning to be at the Hilton on time), Matthew, Jessica and our [illegible], **Philip Bardi.**

By mid-morning, reactions were trickling in via e-mail. Here are excerpts from some

GOLDEN G

ROSARIO Director, Jessica Biel and Matthew Perry

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Golden Globe nominees named

Front page K1

KOSAMO Damien, left, and Jessica Biel

happy nominees.

I want to to Sasha to come up with the most amusing comment: 'I am extremely honored. I'm very proud as well for my fellow actors as well as our director Larry Charles, and our producer Jay Roach, and our very thankful for the Hollywood foreign Press Association's belief and acknowledgment of our film. I have been trying to let Borat know this great news but for the last four hours both of Kazakhstan's telephones have been engaged. Eventually, Premier Nazarbayev answered and said he would pass on the message as soon as Borat returned from Iran, where he is guest of honor at the Holocaust Denial Conference."

Leonardo DiCaprio, sequestered double nominee for Best Actor (Drama), "It is a privilege to be nominated in the same breath with actors like Peter O'Toole, Will Smith and Forest Whitaker. I'm grateful to the HFPA for their recognition, and want to deeply thank my friends Marty Scorsese and Ed Zwick for their extraordinary work as directors."

Clint Eastwood, also a double nominee, for Best Director: "Flags of our Fathers" and "Letters from Iwo Jima" projects that I held very dear and I am thrilled that the members of the HFPA share my enthusiasm for these two movies."

Helen Mirren topped them all with two nominations for Best Actress in a Mini-Series or Movie Made for Television and a Best Actress (Drama) and, she was on the set of her new film, "Notes," with Andy Serkis, the actor who played Gollum and King Kong. Director Iain Softley fell disengagate hurdles around the set and when it was announced that Helen scored three nods, she cast surprised her with the bodyslip.

Helen was reportedly so touched by the whole caper knew: "I am extremely honored to be recognized for... The Queen, Elizabeth I and Prime Suspect. This has been an unprecedented year for me, and I am grateful to have had such well-written roles and to have worked with wonderful directors, actors and crews. I am amazed by the timeliness of 'The Queen,' a story about a leader out of touch with the people, and how the film has struck such a chord with audiences, both British and American, and around the world. Likewise the roles of Elizabeth I and new Inspector are so very different from each other, but both are powerful, vulnerable and flawed women, and have a strong impact on audiences as well."

Meryl Streep didn't drop her tie Queen fashion editor's chilly remark, "Devil's all" in "The Devil Wears Prada" but actually exclaimed: "Thank you, thank you, thank you! I am thrilled and happy and can't wait for that big fabulous party!"

Emily Blunt, Meryl's poo assistant in "Devil," was also double nominee: "It's a huge thrill to have been nominated for performances in two films that are really close to my heart. I had so much fun working with the wonderful casts and crews of "The Devil..." and 'Gideon's Daughter' and I can't wait to speak to Meryl Streep and Bill Nighy to congratulate them on their nominations."

Naomi Watts, our one-time short-term resident of Bella Bella: "I am going to spend the rest of the day enjoying this extraordinary compliment, and I truly hope that this nomination will encourage people to go see 'The Last King of Scotland.'"

Brad Pitt, elated not only for his Best Supporting Actor nod but for the nominations of two films where he served as a co-producer: "I am so pleased to be nominated along with my fellow actors from 'Babel' for a Golden Globe. As a producer with Plan B, I'd also like to congratulate Antoine Fuqua (Training With Fetisher) and all the nominees from 'The Departed.'"

The Great Blanks favourite "It made making up early well

MATTHEW PERRY

worthwhile."

Eddie Murphy, who came back to life via "Dreamgirls" (he sings! he acts!) "I am happily humbled and honored."

Warren Beatty, a first-time nominee: "Being a part of 'Dreamgirls,' and working with a director as wonderful as Bill Condon, was an opportunity of a lifetime for me, enabling me to grow as an actor. To be nominated in two categories (Best Performance by an Actress in a Comedy or Musical and Best Original Song Motion Picture) is an honor that I gratefully accept."

Aretha Franklin got more respect when "Never Gonna Break My Faith" earned a Best Original Song nod for composers Bryan Adams, Rhet Kennedy and Andrea Remacale: "Obama way to start your day, to get a call from your publicist saying you've got a Golden Globe nomination! First I smiled, then I told you, then I said noooooo, then I told you not! My congratulations to the songwriters. When a song you've sung gets a nomination of this magnitude... I love it. What can I say? I'm just thrilled!"

Director Mel

Mr. continue coverage of our interview with controversial director Mel Gibson, whose new film, "Apocalypto," was nominated in the Best Foreign Language Film category. While "Apocalypto" and Clint's "Letters from Iwo Jima" are American productions, these films are in a foreign language. So going by our rules, they ended up in the best foreign film race. This made an already tight race (where "The Hunting of Martin Ohnour" was in the running)

even more competitive.

Do you feel that you are being targeted? And how are you going to get out of it because people are not going to give you a fucked flexibility.

I don't feel like I am being targeted. I think you're a target if you make yourself one or if you are yourself as a target so it's not an issue. I will do what I do and I don't have to depend on a whole lot of other people. I can just do it. It's all about perception. I'm just looking at the other guy over there. You got to take care of yourself. It's my side of the street I got to keep clean.

So you don't feel the need to go out there and help change people's perceptions of you?

You can't change people's perception of you. It's just going to be what it is so all you can do is take care of your own stuff. You can't change anyone.

While some critics are panning this movie as a powerful one, there are many who are saying it is extremely violent. What's your reaction to those comments?

I don't think it's as violent as "Braveheart." I think it's mirthful [laughter]. In "Braveheart," there was a whole sequence at the end of the guy having his testicle flipped over and the one his nose. You don't really see anything. You don't see a knife popping out of the chest or anything. It's a violent world so, of course, you have to tackle the subject. The misstep (they showed that) only says that they were so sophisticated and so long ago. They knew about the constellations. They had a very intricate calendar. They had letters. They had libraries. You juxtapose that against some of the surgery. It was an odd dichotomy. You can't get away from the violent aspect of it. I think as their civilization began to sort of lose its hot climb hit. All he set started to creep in.

You really don't think it's that violent?

I could have really gone to town where that kid gets it in the throat, right? But you saw it from about 60 yards away okay? You didn't actually see a chest cavity with a hand going in. It's less violent than "Braveheart." Everyone likes to beat up some for this reason. People think it's more violent because I have fooled them into caring for the characters. When it's mindless, when it gives a shit, it seems more violent. If you're watching Jean Claude-whatever his name is, you don't give a shit [laughter].

Or if you watch the "Texas Chainsaw Massacre: Part II," do you care about any of the young teenager on the meat hook? No. You don't know who he is so you're inclined more to care. You're just inclined to laugh at it.

You seem to be fascinated with civilizations of the past. If you were to make a contemporary period movie, what should we expect?

I'd end up burned at the stake if I made a contemporary movie. It would have to be some kind of light face [laughter], with maybe a tangent involved—that's it for violence. Anagghhh [laughter]. I think the point is that history repeats itself or regurgitates itself and that other heroes and villains are likes to us. So. We're not so different from the Romans, Greeks or the Ottoman Empire.

You have a large family (seven kids, most of them born in the 1980s). Your daughter just got married and your older sons must be in college. How are things like at home these days?

Oh, fabulous. Things have to mature on. It's like having a house full of grown adults and fortunately they like to hang around. They come back, which means I think on might have done something half right [laughter]. They laugh, eat and wrestle with us, which is good.

And your thoughts of your daughter being married?

Yes, if she's happy, I'm extremely happy.

When you mess up, what is the memorable thing that you do to make up?

Oh, it's usually a fast shirt in the backyard with a trash [laughter]. No, it's okay. We just take [illegible] things as you come and play it out on. Women—even one you've known for a great deal of time—are still a mystery. That's good in a way.

It must have satisfied you that after all the doubting that "The Passion of the Christ" got from the media, it was embraced around the world. Did your faith grow stronger as a result of that whole experience?

Of course. I was happy for Him to have his work watched, appreciated and debated on. They say that if your work doesn't create something of a stir, then it's probably not worth much. It's something that I had not foreseen, honestly, but it took me by surprise. So I was like, all right, let's see where it goes. I was gratified that it did well.

And about your faith?

That's a personal matter.

E-mail the columnist at [illegible]

DIRECTOR Mel Gibson on the set of "Apocalypto"

HELEN MIRREN

MERYL STREEP

BRAD PITT

MARTIN SCORSESE

CLINT EASTWOOD

Fantasia bids past goodbye

From page K1

I still get a lot of "Idol" questions. I still get a lot of interviewers asking me about the Idols. I can't break away.

Do you want to break away?

At first, I was like that. I'm gonna be honest. (Real) you have to sit back and think sometimes because sometimes, you're moving so fast, you start to forget (that) you could have been (Just as) doing (at home if it had not been for) 65 million votes. I want to be viewed as an artist ... at the same time, I'll never forget that...

Ashaee Mardel Moody, AP

FANTASIA just having fun now...

One scare tactic . . .

From page K1

nandito ko songs and his gift as a comedian. But he hopes that, sooner rather than later, Ogie will tackle a serious role for a change. "Seriously, to bag out the thespian in him."

Well, Francis, we're happy to inform you that, some years ago, Ogie "dared" to play no less than our national hero, Dr. Jose Rizal, in Nonoy Gallardo's hit musical, "Sino Ka Ba, Jose Rizal?"—and did very well indeed in the challenging role!

But we agree with you that Ogie should tackle meatier challenging role next time. Any suggestions?

Escape Club opens

On Dec. 20, a new dance club, Escape Club & Restaurant, open in Libis, Q.C., along E. Rodriguez Sr. Avenue (across Red Philippines). The new dance venue has the latest sound and lights, and the best DJ-line up.

'The Best Classical Album'

Warner Music Philippines' "The Best Classical Album"

It is double-CD compilation with 37 tracks, from Beethoven to Bach, and then some. This holiday season, relive the enchantment of the seasons, and share their gift of timeless music.

'The Gift'

For her part, Gemma Map sings best-loved Christmas favorites in "The Gift." The Singaporean singer-songwriter's latest album features her own classy twist on the classic arrangements.

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GALLERIA

1 CASINO ROYALE – THX 1:30 4:30 7:30 10:00
2 HAPPY FEET 12:00 2:45 5:00 7:30 10:00
3 SA ILALIM NG COGON 12:00 1:30 3:00 5:00 7:00 8:30
4 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 2 1:00 2:15 5:30 7:45 10:00
5 TENACIOUS D 1:00 3:30 5:45 7:45 9:50
6 Reserved for VICTORY CHURCH FELLOWSHIP
7 THE NATIVITY STORY 12:30 3:00 5:15 7:30 9:45
8 SPIRIT TRAP 12:45 2:45 5:00 7:00 9:00
9 BORAT A GOOD YEAR 12:30 3:30 6:30 7:30 10:00
10 KAMA SUTRA 3 12:00 2:30 4:30 6:30 8:30 10:30

EJMITA

1 TENACIOUS D 12:30 3:30 5:30 7:30 9:30
2 REYNA 12:00 1:30 3:45 THE NATIVITY STORY 4:45 6:45 10:00
3 HAPPY FEET 11:00 1:15 3:30 5:45 7:45 9:50
4 CASINO ROYALE 12:30 1:45 4:30 7:00 9:30
5 SPIRIT TRAP 12:30 2:30 4:30 7:30 9:30
6 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 2 12:30 2:30 4:30 7:30 9:30
7 KAMA SUTRA 3 12:30 2:30 5:30 7:30 9:30

METRO EAST

1 REYNA 1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 9:00
2 HAPPY FEET 11:00 1:15 3:30 5:45 7:45 9:50
3 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 2 11:30 1:30 3:30 5:45 7:45 9:50
4 THE NATIVITY STORY 11:30 2:15 4:30 6:30 9:15
5 TENACIOUS D 11:00 2:15 4:30 6:30 9:15
6 SPIRIT TRAP 11:00 2:15 4:30 6:30 9:15
7 CASINO ROYALE 12:00 3:00 5:45 8:15 9:00
8 KAMA SUTRA 3 12:30 2:30 4:30 6:30 8:30

NOVALICHES

1 CASINO ROYALE
2 HAPPY FEET
3 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 2
4 REYNA

CITISQUARE MALABON | **PIONEER**

1 MAKAMUNDO
2 REYNA
3 RESERVE
4 RESERVE
1 TENACIOUS D
2 HAPPY FEET
3 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 2
4 SPIRIT TRAP

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STA. ROSA | **LIPA**

1 FLAGS OF OUR FATHERS
2 SANTA CLAUSE 3
3 MY FIRST WEDDING
4 DECK THE HALLS
1 HAPPY FEET
2 THE RETURN
3 SANTA CLAUSE 3
4 STEP UP

DASMARINAS | **ANGELES**

1 FEAST
2 MINSAN PAMANA THE INHERITANCE
3 A GOOD YEAR
4 HAPPY FEET
1 THE MARINE
2 ZU WARRIORS
3 SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS
4 MEE-SHEE

IMUS | **STARMILLS**

1 HAPPY FEET
2 DECK THE HALLS
3 FEAST
4 REYNA
1 HAPPY FEET
2 MEE-SHEE
3 REYNA
4 THE RETURN
5 FRAGILE
6 THE MARINE

BACOLOD | **ILOILO**

1 FRAGILE
2 ZU WARRIORS
3 HAPPY FEET
4 CASINO ROYALE
5 SANTA CLAUSE 3
6 REYNA
1 FRAGILE
2 THE NATIVITY STORY
3 HAPPY FEET
4 REYNA

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One scare tactic after another

"SPIRIT TRAP" IS A SPOOKY chiller about five young people who meet at a large, old house near the university where some of them are staying.

The house looks creepy, but they agree to move there because the rent is ridiculously low. Well, they soon live to regret that decision—or die doing it!

The film starts out quietly, and takes its time before getting its chills and thrills going. But, when the spooky drama has been primed, it's one scare tactic after another, until the survivors stumble blindly into the sunlight. Sadly, few of the old mansion's deadly hold on them.

What is at the core of the house's evil? It turns out that five men executed centuries ago—and, in fact have something in common, each one of them was involved in a church... in a murder, accidental or merely killing.

So, why have they been drawn to this house, in a creepy mini-conference of sorts? It is soon revealed that something sinister and deadly happened in the house a full century ago, and that evil dead is crying out for retribution and satisfaction.

It's the five young adults' bad luck that the act of retribution involves at least one of them!

This is a pretty standard horror-house stuff, but the production is stylish and the performances are enthusiastic and involved...albeit are all the involving.

But our main bond with the movie is one of logic. Since the house looked so horribly forbidding at first sight, why did the students wait for days from so far as grave danger before getting the heck out of there?!

Fans thank stars

Our sworn article thanking some stars for exceptional work this year has elicited additional expressions of gratitude from some fans:

Monica R. Velaza: Claudia Kim's performance for "consistently being a good example, both in transition and duties. It's so easy to show bad, once to get distracted by shallow and self-serving things, but Gary T has set higher goals, and serves a higher purpose."

Sir Sir Jiet, Fresco Apacible expresses his gratitude to Ogie Alcasid, Regine Velasquez, Sharon Cuneta, Kuh Ledesma, Jaya, Lea Salonga, Martin Nievera, Gary Valenciano, Ryan Cayabyab, Jed Madela, Jonathan Manalo, Jay Durias, Jessa Zaragoza, Erik Santos, Rachelle Ann Go, Nyoy Volante, Christian Bautista, Piolo Pascual, Sam Milby, Mark Bautista, Richard Poon, Richard Gomez, Dingdong Dantes, Marvin Agustin, Diether Ocampo, Jericho Rosales, Dennis Trillo, Christopher de Leon, Robin Padilla, Ronaldo Valdez, Eddie Garcia, Dolphy, Vic Sotto, Tito Sotto, Joey de Leon, Ai-Ai delas Alas, Eugene Domingo, Pokwang, Jose Manalo, Wally Bayola, Michael V., Bayani Agbayani, Allan K., Jimmy Santos, Ogie Diaz, Boy Abunda, Kris Aquino, Korina Sanchez, Ted Failon, Julius Babao, Cristy Fermin, Ruffa Gutierrez, Angel Locsin, Marian Rivera, Dawn Zulueta, Judy Ann Santos, Ryan Agoncillo, Bea Alonzo